# In Marx's Shadow

## Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia



Edited by Costica Bradatan and Serguei Alex. Oushakine

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# Introduction

*Costica Bradatan and Serguei Alex. Oushakine*

**1**

The Communist experiment always had intimate relationships with philosophy. Long before becoming a political project, Communism started out as a philosophical idea, if still a vague and multifacetious one. This idea was about a certain utopian understanding of the human society and human history, of what it means to be human and how to fulfill its potentialities. It was, above all, intellectuals who were the first public advocates of the idea, who vouched for it, and who eventually translated it into a specific political language—at the same time, be it said in passing, depriving it of its original innocence. Once implemented, the Communist project constantly needed intellectuals to remind people, time and again, that there was no point in opposing the Communist regimes as Communism was a matter of "historical necessity," the inevitable outcome of the inner workings of history. According to this Marxist line of thought, the "laws of history" were as real and compelling as the "laws of nature." Communism was "bound to happen" just as a dropped object was bound to go down; there was no way out. To support this crucial claim, Communist ideologists had to advance and maintain an ample theoretical and conceptual apparatus—a whole repertoire of notions, ideas and catchphrases extracted from the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and able not just to offer an easily comprehensible philosophy of history, but also to provide specific answers to the many challenges posed by the unfolding of the real life.

Ironically enough, a similar drive to "philosophize" also inspired discourses of those who opposed the Communist experiment. Faced with the intellectually grounded claims of the regime, many dissidents and

anticommunist activists in socialist countries felt compelled to provide similar philosophical frameworks that could explain the unfeasibility of the Communist project and could predict its inevitable collapse. For these people, Communism was simply "bound *not* to happen." And they sought to prove that by grounding their discourses in concepts of human nature, society and history that emphasized authenticity, freedom, human rights, "care for the soul," and so on. As a result, the confrontation between the Communist regimes and their discursive oppositions was structured as an ongoing philosophical exchange between competing social models. The conflict also included a clash over the different claims to truth on which each party based its political and ideological positioning. That the former used sometimes brutal force to silence the latter only testifies to the uttermost significance and intensity of these clashes. Interestingly, the collapse of Communist regimes has not by any means exhausted this philosophical "dialogue." On the contrary, the conversation became even broader, more sophisticated, and more intense.

The idea of the present volume was born out of the need to account for this neglected intellectual "dialogue" that, like a persistent shadow, accompanied the Communist experiment and its collapse. This conversation took place within the space delineated by three main categories of actors: the institutions involved in the production of knowledge, the institutions involved in the practice of power, and—playing the role of a somehow fluid category—the intellectuals as mediators between knowledge and power. If we use Katherine Verdery's definition of the intellectuals as "occupants of a site that is privileged in forming and transmitting discourses, in constituting thereby the means through which society is 'thought' by its members,"[1] it is worth understanding how the intellectuals had to negotiate ways of shaping and disseminating discourses that reflected their different positionings within the relationship knowledge-power under the Communist regime. As producers of knowledge in a highly politicized context, intellectuals were inevitably related to various practices and institutions of power. Some were intimately connected with power institutions, serving as their "brain." Others just happened to be "believers" in whatever these institutions had to proclaim. Some had to be assiduously courted by the Communist regime before agreeing to collaborate; others simply became too infatuated with the benefits and privileges that the regime had to offer. Then, there were those who did not want to have anything to do with the regime and its ideology, and as a consequence had to turn themselves into window cleaners and night porters to make their living. In some cases, it was not even possible to change jobs like that and some dissidents had to pay a high price for their distancing from the regime, being persecuted or even annihilated. This volume maps out, if in a tentative fashion, a vast

territory delineated by the complex web of relationships between power, knowledge, and intellectuals in East Europe and Russia.

## 2

Despite its key role in the intellectual shaping of state socialism, Communist thought is often dismissed as mere propaganda or as a rhetorical exercise aimed at advancing socialist intellectuals on their way to power.[2] Traditionally framed within the dichotomy "commissars vs. dissidents," the Communist thought and its anticommunist reflection are thus perceived first of all as a political project, narrowly defined.[3] This volume offers a different approach. By drawing attention to unknown and unexplored areas, trends and ways of thinking under the Communist regime, the volume demonstrates how various bodies of theoretical knowledge (philosophical, social, political, aesthetic, even theological) were used not only to justify dominant political views, but also to frame oppositional and nonofficial discourses and practices.

The examination of the underlying structures of Communism as an intellectual project provides convincing evidence for questioning yet another approach that routinely frames the post-Communist intellectual development as a "revival" or, at least, as a "return of the repressed."[4] As the book demonstrates, the logic of a radical break, suggested by this approach, is in contradiction with historical evidence: for instance, genealogies of current explosions of intellectual racism or radical religiosity could be easily traced back to the Communist past. More significantly even, some of the intellectual actors who came to shape the public discourse in Eastern Europe and Russia in the 1990s had in fact been involved in the production of mainstream knowledge under the Communist regime in their respective countries. Certainly, from an ethical standpoint, some may regard this conversion as duplicity or opportunism pure and simple, but the fact remains that the sheer possibility of such a dual involvement points to not so radical a break: some of the issues and topics they were talking about, "before" and "after," must have been rooted in one and the same intellectual, philosophical, or emotional repertoire. To give just an example, an author who in the 1980s would provide the regime in his country with theoretical arguments for, say, an isolationist foreign policy, would have absolutely no problem reinventing himself as a Euroskeptic in the 1990s or the 2000s.

One of the major findings of the book is that a significant number of philosophical, theoretical, and ideological debates in post-Communist world did not appear out of the blue, but had their roots in some of the cultural processes and intellectual projects of the previous period. Many of these

debates are in fact the logical continuation of intellectual conversations and confrontations initiated long before 1989.

## 3

However, this book has not been conceived as a historical study strictly speaking: it is, systematically and deliberately, an *interdisciplinary* project, where scholars from various disciplines and of differing theoretical persuasions engage in a collective multileveled project. That's why, apart from intellectual historians, the project brings together anthropologists, political scientists, literary scholars, philosophers, and religious scientists. The overarching goal of the project is to offer an understanding of this complex set of phenomena: the multifacetious relationship between the practices of power, the production of knowledge, and the role of the public intellectuals as mediators between the two before and after the collapse of Communism. We have deliberately sought to reflect the plurality of Communism-inspired discourses by conceiving this volume as a collection of diverse approaches, methodologies, theoretical and ideological persuasions that could provide different accesses to understanding Communist and post-Communist phenomena. At the same time, this plurality confers on the project as a whole a certain sense of fluid unity, which we hope the readers will not find unattractive.

The argument of the book unfolds in four stages. The first section ("The Sickle, the Hammer, and the Typewriter") takes us into the very heart of our topic: the fundamental "conversation" that took place, virtually everywhere in the Socialist Bloc, between the practitioners of power and various producers of knowledge (philosophers, social scientists, theorists in general). The web of relationships woven by intellectuals between the two spheres is impressive and worth paying attention to in all four cases discussed (Russia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania).

First, in his chapter Mikhail Epstein offers an ambitious introduction to the history of Russian philosophy, which not only sets up the general theoretical framework for much of what follows, but also points to some of the more problematic aspects of the relationship between the sphere of knowledge production and that of power practice. In an effort to relate Russian thought to the philosophical tradition of utopian thinking, Epstein undertakes an ample historical journey and traces this tradition back as far as Plato. As Epstein points out, during the Soviet period Russian Platonism asserted itself as the regulative principle of social and political life, turning ideology into a material force. "Metaphysical radicals" and "conceptualists" of the 1980s to early 1990s epitomized the two major movements within the broad field of what Epstein labels as Russian "ideocracy." While rooted

in a similar attempt to treat word and idea as something vital, the two lines of thought significantly differed in their understanding of the role of philosophy in Soviet and post-Soviet societies. For "metaphysical radicals," the goal of practical transformation of the world superseded any aspiration for advancing social knowledge. In turn, for "conceptualists," the practical world emerged as a philosophical reflection, as a mental construction, supported by "the bare skeleton of abstract discourse."

Then, in his contribution Jeffrey Murer proposes a closer look to the dynamic of Marxist thought in political contexts where Marxism-Leninism as the regime's "official philosophy" provided plenty of room for a Marxist critique of the regime itself. Murer brings forth two examples: the Budapest School (mainly Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller and György Márkus) and the *Praxis* group in former Yugoslavia (first of all, Mihailo Djurić, Mihailo Marković, and Svetozar Stojanović). In both cases, an insider group of philosophers and social theorists come to initiate a "heretical" movement, directed against what they regarded as a betrayal of the original meaning of Communism. From their point of view, the problem with the regime was not that it was too socialist, but—on the contrary—that it was not socialist enough, not truly socialist. Murer's chapter has the important merit of underlining the paradoxical fact that Communism was not always opposed by anticommunists, but sometimes even by Marxists, in the name of Marxism itself.

In the next chapter Letitia Guran approaches the relationship between knowledge and power from a different angle. Her account is dedicated to what it means—for a philosopher, artist or creative writer—to live and work under a Communist regime on a daily basis, to have to actually face the regime and its many demands. Guran questions the meaning, articulations, social functions, and political dimension (or lack thereof) of what might be considered "aesthetic utopianism." For the most part, she discusses the case of a major Romanian philosopher, Constantin Noica (1909–1987), who advocated a creative form of non-political involvement, also known as "resistance through high-culture." Even though frequently contested (especially after the collapse of communism), Noica's educational utopia, with the refuge it advocated in the realm of the great books, definitely had its quixotic charm. It brought forth, above all, a compensatory mechanism: the aesthetic satisfaction that the creation of a work of philosophy, literature or art can, under certain circumstances, silence a guilty conscience generated by civic indifference and noninvolvement.

What Clemena Antonova offers in her chapter is a case study, highly indicative of a certain type of relationship between the sphere of knowledge and that of power in the Soviet Union. She traces how the legacy of a major Russian thinker (Pavel Florensky) was radically transformed—yet survived—during the Soviet and post-Soviet period. Trained as a physicist,

Florensky became famous as a religious philosopher in the early 1910s. When in 1922 the Bolsheviks expelled over a hundred of Russian philosophers and literary scholars from the country, he managed to stay in Russia. The Soviet regime preferred to see him as a scientist rather as a religious thinker. This did not prevent Florensky from being executed in 1937; however, it did determine significantly the public perception of his work. Rediscovered in the 1960, Florensky was praised first of all for his original contributions to the emerging field of semiotics and cultural analysis; his religious views were neatly bracketed off. In turn, Florensky's post-perestroika reception went in the opposite direction, by framing his scholarship exclusively within the context of religious thought. As Antonova suggests, these attempts to find a "proper" location for Florensky's unorthodox legacy might be missing the point: the revival of Florensky's legacy does not require the revival of old taxonomies and classifications.

The second section of the book ("Heretics") deals with the production of dissident discourses in relation to the practice of power in a communist regime. Thus, in a chapter on "totalitarian language" Veronika Tuckerová discusses the political use of language in a totalitarian context and three distinct responses to it: Václav Havel, Petr Fidelius, and George Orwell. These authors, in their specific ways, are concerned with the linguistic manipulation, disruption, and eventually aggression to which an individual living in a totalitarian state (be it actual or only imagined) is systematically subjected. For there is no better way to get control over people's minds than through the language they speak. Bodies under occupation can still resist, oppose, counterperform, even commit suicide, but minds under (linguistic) occupation are in a much more difficult situation: their subjugation is gradual, insidious and almost unavoidable. Whereas Orwell's analysis of the politics of language in *1984* is well known to the English-language reader, Tuckerová's contribution provides two relatively unknown cases of lucid (insider's) analysis of the type of linguistic aggression one faces in the context of real socialism.

Dealing with an even more dramatic situation, Costica Bradatan's chapter is dedicated to a twentieth-century case of philosophical martyrdom: Jan Patočka. Due to his involvement in the Charter 77 movement and the subsequent police interrogation, Patočka found himself in a situation where the most persuasive argument he could make use of was his own dying body. By dying a martyr's death, Patočka helped the cause of the Czechoslovakian dissidence in a much more significant and efficient way than he could have done just by his philosophical writings and underground seminars. Following in the footsteps of Socrates, Hypatia, Giordano Bruno, and Edith Stein, Patočka made his death become not only a significant part of his life, but an important argument in his work, too—that is, a way of testing the validity of his ideas. It is, of course, one of the cruelest ironies of life in a regime

that claims to be based on philosophy that here philosophers, to make their points, have to resort sometimes to philosophy as an art of dying.

In her chapter Natasa Kovacevic's discusses the production of dissident discourses from a particular thematic angle: namely, she talks about the "Orientalization" of East European Communist regimes during the Cold War, with special attention to Joseph Brodsky, Czesław Miłosz, and Milan Kundera. In her reading, the use of Orientalist stereotypes by these authors betrays a certain sense of anxiety to distance themselves from Communist politics and emancipate their homeland from stereotypes of cultural backwardness. To show that what "happened" to their countries is highly "unnatural" and "aberrant," they orientalize Russia and push it eastward as much as they can. Russia thus becomes a strange entity, somehow out of this world, unable to occupy any specific location, rejected by everybody, floating freely, without any firm geographical anchor.

The third major section of the book ("In Search of a [New] Mission") connects some intellectual trends born before the collapse of Communism to a series of post-Communist intellectual developments. As suggested earlier, this is an important aspect of the project as it points to continuities of ideas between "before" and "after" the dismantling of the Communist project. Continuing the theme explored in Kovacevic's chapter, Serguei Oushakine's contribution explores a post-Soviet version of Orientalist discourses. However, in this case, the essay deals with self-orientalizing intellectual models and schemes developed by provincial Russian sociologists. Oushakine discusses two main versions of this post-Soviet "Orientalism." First is the genre of ethnohistories of trauma, in which social scientists address current problems in Russia through the constant rewriting of Russia's past in order to demonstrate the non-Russian character of its national/state institutions, and, correspondingly, the anti-Russian nature of these institutions' politics. Using the genre of "Russian tragedy" as a main organizing frame, historians of ethnotrauma split the Russian ethnos off from available political institutions and present it as an organic body that is routinely attacked by "external" and "alien" forces. While being closely associated with the rhetoric and methods of traumatic ethnohistories, the second category, ethnovitalism, is less preoccupied with the unceasing portrayal of the past harm and sufferings of the nation. Its main goal is to provide the analytics of ethnic survival that could "compensate the loss of cultural genotype" of the Russian nation. The struggle over interpreting the nation's memory of the past, so typical for traumatic ethnohistories, is replaced in ethnovitalism by a similar struggle over constructing and interpreting perceptions of the nation's current experience.

In her chapter, Maria Todorova focuses on a different type of response to Orientalism. By looking at the categories of "Balkan" and "Eastern Europe," Todorova draws attention to the ideological origin of these

"regional" taxonomies. Taken now for granted, both terms, nonetheless, took their current shape only in the twentieth century. As she stresses, this time-bound and place-bound specificity of the region (and its terminology) counts; and it is precisely this specificity that is often neglected or overshadowed by post-socialist attempts to theorize the history of the region within the frame of postcolonial theory. As a result, postcolonialism's anticipatory striving is often used as a "cover" for self-victimizing laments. As Todorova suggests, instead of perpetuating geographical taxonomies left behind by the Cold War scholarship, it might be more productive to pay a close attention to contradictory and incommensurable political, social, and cultural legacies that have been shaping the space called "Eastern Europe."

The third contribution on this topic, by Elena Gapova, similarly explores the postsocialist intersection of knowledge production and national affects. Gapova is less concerned with issues of exclusion of the Other through delimitating the borders of a new nation. Instead, she portrays how the Belarusian intellectuals produced discourses which distanced them from the "people" they claimed to represent. Ideocratic radicals of sorts, Belarusian intellectuals continued the Soviet tradition of didactic preaching by infantilizing the people and by elevating themselves "above" the masses. As Gapova suggests, the intellectuals' adherence to patronizing and self-distancing rhetoric might indicate a particular form of anxiety, produced by a drastic and radical uncoupling of the usual link between power and knowledge that was so common during the Soviet period. Unable to impose their "epistemological hegemony" through political means, intellectuals claimed their moral supremacy as their ultimate ground.

In the last section of the book ("Reinventing Hope"), three contributions discuss how the collapse of Communism had a major impact on the shaping of the post-Communist ideological, political and intellectual landscape in the 1990s. Thus, in an effort to map out the vast ideological space created by the demise of Leninism, Vladimir Tismaneanu comes to identify a series of illiberal discourses and nationalist-salvationist tendencies. These are, for him, symptoms of a political pathology, the by-product of the complex process of dismantling of Communism. Further, Tismaneanu places these discourses and tendencies at the root of many disruptions that occurred in the process of transition to democracy in Eastern Europe and Russia, and insists on the role of civil society as the main vehicle for articulating the ideals of a democratic political community.

Ivars Ijabs's chapter focuses on the importance of the philosophical notion of "civil society" for creating a healthy public sphere in Eastern Europe after the collapse of Communism. In this context, his chapter advances the notion of "politics of authenticity," which he relies on the insight that political involvement of the civil actors must be based on some form of personal "truthfulness" of those involved. To articulate this thesis, Ijabs initiates a

dialogue with Václav Havel's early political works, on the one hand, and with Charles Taylor's works on the ethics of authenticity, on the other. This theoretical excursus helps him advance a series of general considerations on the (re)construction of civil society in Eastern Europe.

Finally, in close connection with the topic of Ijabs's contribution, Aurelian Crăiuţu dedicates the final chapter of the book to the political philosophy developed by a contemporary Romanian philosopher, Mihai Şora. This chapter explores Şora's theory of authenticity and alienation, as well as his philosophy of dialogue and civil society. Crăiuţu finds in Şora's work (itself an example of dialogical thinking as it combines phenomenology, Marxism, neo-Thomism, and Christian existentialism) an exemplary art of dialogical engagement of the philosopher with the public life and its many demands. For Crăiuţu such a work is important not only for its intrinsic speculative qualities, but it also has a crucial merit in terms of the benefits that society can always draw from it: it teaches us what it means to live democratically, as free and autonomous subjects, who know how to enjoy and take pride in their freedom.

This last section is not only the concluding part of the book. In a way, it also reveals its openness. The chapters in this section deal with the potentialities of hope one comes across when studying Eastern Europe and Russia today, with the promises of renewal and regeneration one reads in recent developments here. This section is particularly important as it takes forward the conversation that the book proposes. For this volume is not only about the end of an era, but it also about a new beginning, about collective efforts of self-reinvention and repositioning in history and in the present.

## 4

In many respects, the volume is an effort to begin a "cartographic" exploration of the world of communist ideas. This project is not about giving complete answers; rather its goal is to initiate a larger inquiry, to start mapping out a vast territory of questions and interrogations shaped and/or left behind by decades of state socialism. It is the first attempt of this kind, and as any pioneering endeavor it is bound to be partial and incomplete: the volume does not present a comprehensive overview of Eastern European and Eurasian intellectual traditions during and after Communism. Nor could it cover all the theoretical implications of the topic. We hope, however, that this beginning will stimulate a larger conversation on the relationship between the Communist experiment on one hand, and knowledge, power and intellectuals on the other.

One final word about the history of this volume. It started in October 2005 with an interdisciplinary conference on the state of philosophy in Russia

and Eastern Europe organized by Miami University's Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies. The conference (entitled "Thinking in/after Utopia") brought together junior and senior scholars from the United States and Europe to discuss the most important trends in Russian and East European philosophy during the Communist regime and after its collapse. A selection of the papers presented at the conference formed the starting point of this volume. All these papers underwent significant subsequent revision. At the same time, a couple of new contributions were invited from scholars in the field (Maria Todorova and Elena Gapova).



We would like to thank the Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies at Miami University of Ohio for organizing the initial conference and for initiating this editorial project. We are also grateful to the Princeton University Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Havighurst Center at Miami University for their financial support of this publication. Further assistance from Aurelian Crăiuţu and Clemena Antonova significantly simplified the preparation of the manuscript. Finally, we are indebted to Florian Grond's artistic imagination for his vision of Marx's Shadow.

## NOTES

1. Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 17.

2. For a classical version of this approach see the influential study: George Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

3. See, for example, Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

4. See, for example, Krishan Kumar, *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2001); Stephen Webber and Ilkka Liikanen, eds., *Education and Civic Culture in Post-Communist Countries* (London: Palgrave, 2001); Anna Wessely, ed., *Intellectuals and the Politics of the Humanities* (Budapest: Collegium Budapest Workshop Series, 2002).

# I

# THE SICKLE, THE HAMMER, AND THE TYPEWRITER

# 1

# Ideas against Ideocracy: The Platonic Drama of Russian Thought

*Mikhail Epstein*

> SOCRATES: The ideal society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers.
>
> —Plato, *The Republic*, trans. H. D. P. Lee (473 C10)

> That kings should become philosophers, or philosophers kings, is not likely to happen; nor would it be desirable, since the possession of power invariably debases the free judgment of reason. It is, however, indispensable that a king—or a kingly, i.e. self-ruling, people—should not suppress philosophers but leave them the right of public utterance.
>
> —Immanuel Kant, *On Eternal Peace, Second Supplement*, trans. Karl Popper[1]

> It's a property of the Russian people to indulge in philosophy. . . . The fate of the philosopher in Russia is painful and tragic.
>
> —Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*

> The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own.
>
> —Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (34)

This chapter discusses the relationship between political power and intellectuals under the specific mode of production of ideas in the totalitarian

society. The very phenomenon of totalitarianism is explained as the regime of ideocracy, or "the dictatorship of ideas" that endows intellectuals with the most powerful and at the same time the most vulnerable role in the society, dividing them into orthodox "ideologists" and heterodox "intelligentsia." The struggle in Russia between intelligentsia and ideocracy, or between intellectuals at the service of Reason and the intellectuals at the service of power, constitutes one of the most dramatic episodes in the world history of ideas. The roots of this drama go back to Plato's vision of philosophers-kings and the society ruled by all-powerful ideas. Surprisingly, the Russian revolution, although conducted under Marxist slogans, had inaugurated the political regime that was more reminiscent of Platonic ideocratic state than of economically driven Marxist society. How it became possible that the most radical and militant wing of Russian materialism led by Lenin and Stalin had in fact promoted the most extreme of all idealistic utopias, the Platonic state of ideas, to the rank of world superpowers?

What is usually called "Soviet Marxism" would be more aptly called "Plato-Marxism." The origins of this enigmatic oxymoronic synthesis can be elucidated from the long standing premises of Russian intellectual history and, in its turn, is instrumental for defining further, post-Soviet perspectives of Russian thought.

## PLATO-MARXISM

Academic scholarship in the West tends to be suspicious of the very phenomenon of Russian philosophy. At best, it is categorized as "ideology" or "social thought." But what is philosophy?

There is no simple and universal definition, and many thinkers consider it impossible to formulate one. The most credible attempt seems to be a nominalistic reference: philosophy is what Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel were occupied with. Perhaps, the best-known and most widely cited—if slightly eccentric—definition belongs to A. N. Whitehead: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them . . . European philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato."[2]

If this is true, then Russian philosophy must be viewed as an indispensable part of the Western intellectual heritage, since it provides perhaps the most elaborate footnotes to Plato's most mature and comprehensive dialogues: the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Questions of social ethics and political philosophy, of an individual's relationship to the state, of adequate knowledge and virtuous behavior, of wisdom and power, of religious and

aesthetic values, of ideas and ideals as guidelines for human life—all of these are central to Russian philosophy and exemplify its continuing relevance to the Western tradition. Moreover, the very status of ideas in Russian philosophy (as represented by Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel Florensky, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Semyon Frank, Georgy Fedotov, and many others) mirrors Plato's vision of them as ontological entities, "laws," or ideal principles—as opposed to mere epistemological units, the tools of cognition. "Knowledge" and "power," as well as "thinking" and "being," have been always intimately interrelated in Russian intellectual vision.

If we try to single out the central trend of Russian philosophy that can be compared with those of "rationalism" in French philosophy, "idealism" in German philosophy, "empiricism" in English philosophy, and "pragmatism" in American philosophy, this quintessentially Russian "ism" would be "totalism." Such diverse Russian thinkers as Chaadaev and Belinsky, Ivan Kireevsky and Herzen, Vladimir Soloviev and Vasily Rozanov all put forward the category of "integrity," "wholeness," "totality" (*tsel'nost'*, *tselostnost'* ) or "total-unity" (*vseedinstvo*), which presupposes, first of all, the unity of knowledge and existence, of reason and faith, intellectual and social life. Gregory Skovoroda (1722–1794) who is often dubbed "the first original Russian-Ukrainian thinker" expressed the following credo in his prayer to God on sending a new Socrates to Russia: "I believe that knowledge should not be limited to the high-priests of science and scholarship, who stuff themselves to overflowing with it, but should enter into the life of the whole people."[3]

Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856), a founder of Russian Slavophilism, sought to inaugurate "an independent philosophy corresponding to the basic principles of ancient Russian culture and capable of subjecting the divided culture of the West to the integrated consciousness of believing reason."[4] Characteristically, Kireevsky derived this tendency of Russian philosophy from Plato's heritage, as opposed to "the mind of Western man [which] seems to have a special kinship with Aristotle,"[5] that is, with "one-sided abstract rationalism." Invoking the legacy of Eastern Christian thought, Kireevsky asserts that

> in Greek thinkers we do not notice a special predilection for Aristotle, but, on the contrary, the majority of them overtly prefer Plato . . . probably because Plato's very mode of thinking presents more integrity (*tsel'nost'*) in the exercises of mind, more warmth and harmony in the speculative activity of reason. That is why virtually the same relationship that we notice between the two philosophers of antiquity [Aristotle and Plato] existed between the philosophy of the Latin world as it was elaborated in scholasticism, and the spiritual philosophy that we find in the writers of the Eastern Church, the philosophy that was especially clearly expressed by the Holy Fathers who lived after the defection of [Catholic] Rome.[6]

This inclination to relate Russian thought to Plato in contrast to Aristotle became a hallmark of the Russian intellectual tradition, which assumed that "in Plato's teaching, religion and philosophy are in the closest contact, but already in Aristotle's system philosophy breaks off with religion definitively."[7]

This Platonic tendency to integrate philosophical and religious teachings and to implement them politically culminated in twentieth-century Russia. In discussing Russian philosophy, especially the Soviet period, we have inevitably to consider the practical fate of "integrative" Platonic conceptions as we explore the final outcome of an ideocratic utopia, in which philosophy was designated to rule the republic as the supreme religious and political authority. Nowhere have Plato's teachings on the relationship of ideas to the foundation of a state been incarnated so vigorously and on such a grandiose scale as in communist Russia.

One might even say that the philosophy of the Soviet epoch is the final stage of the development and embodiment of Plato's ideas in the Western world. During this stage, the project of ideocracy came to a complete realization and exhausted itself. In a certain sense, *Russian philosophy both summarizes and punctuates more than two thousand years of the Platonic tradition* and points the way for a return to foundations that are not susceptible to ideocratic and ideological perversions.

From the 1920s through the 1940s, the czardom of communist ideas succeeded in equating itself with reality, but beginning in the mid 1950s, stimulated by Khrushchev's denunciations of Stalin in 1956, this "ideal republic" increasingly revealed its illusory quality in a sharp discrepancy with reality. A relatively short period of seventy years sums up a two-millennial adventure of Western thought that followed Plato's search for the world of pure ideas. Among these footnotes to Plato, Soviet philosophy appears to the attentive eye as the final entry, signifying "the End."

What was the role of Marxism in the Platonic drama of Russian philosophy? Marxism, which deduces all ideas from the economic basis of society, would seem to be diametrically opposed to Platonism. But let us remember that Marxism is nothing other than a reversal of Hegelian idealism, the final moment in the self-development of the Absolute Idea. What is principally new in Hegel, as compared with Plato, is the progressive historical development of the idea, but the end of this process is postulated as the universal state, presumably conceived on the model of the Prussian monarchy, which embraces the totality of the self-cognizant mind. Both Platonic and Hegelian idealism culminate with the concept of the ideal State. Although Marx removed this ideal from the causality of the historical process, it remains in his system as a teleological motive and grows into a vision of a future communist society.[8]

Plato, Hegel, and Marx represent three stages in the development of idealism in its progressive symbiosis with social engineering: (1) the supernatural world of ideas, (2) the manifestation of Absolute Idea in history, and (3) the transformation of history by the force of ideas. For Plato, ideas are abstracted to a transcendental realm. For Hegel, the Idea is already ingrained as the alpha and omega of the historical process: it generates, and at the same time consummates, history in the course of its progressive self-awareness. Marx abolishes the idea as the alpha of history in order to emphasize the omega-point: the prospect of a historical culmination of unified humanity in the transparent kingdom of ideas, the self-government of collective reason.

Moreover, Marxism potentially proves more staunchly idealistic than even Platonism. According to the Greek philosopher, the world of ideas exists in and of itself, without necessarily demanding historical embodiment. For Marx, ideas are inseparable from the material process and are greedy for realization and implementation. In his own words, "theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses."[9] Further in his work "Toward the Critique of Hegelian Philosophy of the Right. Introduction," Marx writes: "The revolutionary past of Germany is theoretical, it's Reformation. Then revolution began in the brain of a monk; now it begins in the brain of a philosopher." The same "brain-wise" production of revolution happened in Russia. The message of "militant materialism" (Lenin's term), as realized in Russia by Lenin and his disciples, was that the power of "progressive" ideas should not be *abstracted from* but rather *attracted to* material life, even subordinating and transforming the economic basis. Hence, the institution of five-year plans that subordinated the entire development of the country to ideal projections. Whereas in Plato and Hegel ideas still soared in the clouds, constituting a separate sphere of Supreme Mind or Absolute Spirit, in Soviet Marxism they had to be implemented in the foundation of material life, from heavy industry to everyday reality, and from the rituals of party purges to ceremonial cleansings of neighborhoods. The ruling ideology would not forgive the slightest flaw or deviation from the purity of ideas; because they had descended into the substance of being, they demanded the complete submission of every person at every moment of his or her life. Soviet materialism proved to be an instrument of militant idealism, craving ever newer sacrifices for the altar of sacred ideas. This occurred in strict correspondence with another Marx's statement: "the point is that revolutions (that begin in the brain) need a *passive* element, a *material* basis."

For these reasons, the dominant intellectual movement of the Soviet epoch should be identified not just as Marxism, but as Marxist Platonism, an idealism that asserts itself as the regulative principle of material life. If

Plato, proceeding from idealist assumptions, deduced the system of the communist state, then Marx, proceeding from communist assumptions, deduced a system of severe ideocracy that was realized through the efforts of his most consistent and determined Russian followers. Materialism became an ideology, and the very phrase "materialist ideology" came to sound perfectly natural to Soviet citizens. No less natural is the term "Marxist Platonism."

## TWO FACES OF RUSSIAN PLATONISM

Platonism is the underside of Marxism, and the eventual collapse of the Soviet ideocratic state could be viewed as a death sentence for both of them.

But what can come to succeed it? A new idealism that will proceed from the grounds of Russian religious philosophy, from the legacy of Vladimir Soloviev and the Silver Age?

Surprisingly, the heritage of Platonism is common to such ideological antagonists as prerevolutionary idealists and Soviet Marxists and presupposes a kind of division of intellectual labor between them. Russian communism emphasized the material and social aspects of the Platonic utopia, while religious thinkers emphasized its ideal and spiritual aspects. But the ultimate project of Platonism is not separation but unification of both worlds: the full materialization of ideal norms. Therefore, it assumes the complementarity and even fusion of idealism and materialism.

The Russian intelligentsia of the second half of the nineteenth century made its way from old-style idealism to fashionable materialism, and in the early twentieth century strove to return from shallow materialism to religious idealism. Later, these two countermovements were repeated in the same order in the early Soviet obsession with "dialectical materialism" (1920s–1950s) and the disenchantment with materialism (1960s–1980s). But these seemingly opposite directions actually evolved within a single Platonic paradigm of *socially active idealism*. Materialists and Sophiologists unconsciously converge in their adherence to the Platonic ideocratic project and work together to idealize and ideologize human existence, on the one hand, and to materialize these most abstract ideas in social practice, on the other.

It is aptly remarked that Aleksei Losev (1893–1988), considered the last representative of Russian idealism, was also the first to identify the Platonic subtexts of the Soviet ideocracy. As a contemporary commentator remarks, according to Losev "the newly evolving 'materialism' elaborated its own 'kingdom of ideas,' its own mythology and dogmatics. . . . Therefore, Platonism was for Losev the secret hero of political storms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. . . . Socialist mythology . . . according to Losev, natu-

rally implemented Platonism in its social-political practice."[10] Losev himself was ambivalent about the meaning of Platonism; he criticized its paganism and affiliation with the political system of slavery, but at the same time he interpreted Orthodoxy as a genuinely Christian Platonism.

One can surmise that this ambivalence was inherent not only in Losev's work, but in the entire tradition of Russian philosophy, which aspired to the Christian modification of Platonism, but actually slipped into its pagan version, the ideology of state socialism and, accordingly, the totalitarian system of state slavery. Marxist philosophers used to criticize Russian religious thought ("idealism") as the manifestation of a reactionary, bourgeois or feudalist worldview, incompatible with scientific and social progress. New critics, including Evgenii Barabanov, Sergei Khoruzhii, and Boris Paramonov, on the contrary, blame Russian idealism for its secret or unconscious complicity with the communist Revolution, by supposedly preparing the ground for this social cataclysm through the dissemination of apocalyptic forebodings. In this view, Russian society proved so receptive to the messianic revelations of Marxism and the mystique of the last bloody battle and coming golden age, precisely because Soloviev, Fedorov, Berdyaev, and Merezhkovsky had already tuned the soul of the nation to the key of eschatological expectations that would be fulfilled, or at least precipitated, by their contemporaries and compatriots—by Russia as the vanguard of posthistory. Virtually none of the great Russian philosophers (with a partial exception of Vladimir Soloviev) was an evolutionist, none of them developed a system justifying gradual improvement of existing conditions; rather, all of them were either metaphysical radicals, who valorized cataclysmic solutions for historical problems (like Fedorov and Berdyaev), or existential skeptics (like Shestov or Rozanov) who doubted the bourgeois values of rationality and productivity.

From this critical point of view, Russian philosophy was anti-Marxist and anticommunist only because it was inherently antibourgeois and regarded Marxism and socialism as mere extensions of capitalist, philistine ideals. Thinkers like Fedorov and Berdyaev condemned Marxism not for its revolutionary ambitions but because it seemed insufficiently revolutionary, promising only better modes of production instead of a spiritual transformation of the earth. Therefore, the anticommunist stance of these thinkers expressed even more ardent hatred for the existing world, in that the total eschatological renovation they envisioned threatened to claim even more victims than the metaphysically more moderate and materialistically motivated Marxism of Lenin and his followers.

The new criticism offered by Evgenii Barabanov, Sergei Khoruzhii, Boris Paramonov, and others, of course, does not attempt to justify Marxism as such, but demonstrates that the Russian version of Marxism proved to be a much more dangerous and destructive doctrine precisely because of its

synthesis with the eschatological "Russian Idea" as professed by idealist and anti-Marxist thought. The paradox of this critical examination of Russian religious philosophy is that it now comes from religious thinkers themselves, who regard the very phenomenon of *religious philosophy* with suspicion, both from religious and philosophical points of view. Soloviev advanced as the task of his philosophy a "justification of the faith of the Fathers," but does faith need rational justification? And should reason pursue the same truth that is already given in revelation?

The question is: Now that Platonism, in its Marxist guise, has been overcome by Russian thought, is it still possible to find inspiration in Platonism as such, in its most sublime idealistic and religious interpretations? Or does the experience of Russian history convincingly argue that Platonism has exhausted itself as a spiritual resource for humanity and that all attempts to Christianize it are just wishful illusions?

Whatever the answer may be, it is indisputable that the ongoing relevance of Platonism for Russian thought can provide the ground for its intensive dialogue with the Western philosophy also rooted in Plato's heritage.

## PHILOSOPHICAL STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

What then is the task of contemporary Russian philosophy? On this point, the projections of critics diverge. It is argued, on the one hand, that Russian philosophy should secularize itself, abandoning both the theological claims of prerevolutionary idealism and the ideological claims of Marxism. Hence Russian philosophy needs to undergo the same process of epistemological self-criticism and analytical self-limitation that Western philosophy has undertaken in a variety of distinct movements over the last two centuries, with Kant, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Derrida. In other words, intellectuals have to desacralize their labor, to produce knowledge rather than ideas, to abandon any claims for spiritual power and relinquish even the ambitious and pathetic title of intelligentsia that was fraught with so many delusions of self-aggrandizement.

An additional measure may also be required, according to such authors as Evgenii Barabanov and Boris Groys. Since Russian philosophy has long been immersed in its neurosis of distinctiveness, these thinkers believe it must submit to psychoanalytic treatment in order to demystify its metaphysical pretensions, to expose the inferiority complex behind them and heal the birth trauma caused in the eighteenth century by medieval Russia's abrupt exposure to the Enlightenment. In this context, the most compelling part of the Russian intellectual legacy is not its celebrated achievements, whether those of the religious idealists (like Soloviev) or of the revolutionary materialists (like Chernyshevsky), but the work

of the academic philosophers—neo-Kantians, positivists, intuitivists, phenomenologists—who may have lacked original theoretical constructions but were more modest, sober, and accurate in their epistemological analyses.

Another point of view, most persistently elaborated by Sergei Khoruzhii, is that Russian religious idealism was not purely Orthodox at all, was not even Christian, but essentially idealistic in a Platonic sense. According to Khoruzhii, the "false" notion that Platonism prepared the ground for Christianity and remains its most authentic philosophical foundation, has haunted European thought for centuries, pervading neo-Platonism, Rationalism, German Idealism, and other major systems. Khoruzhii states that Russian thought is not the sole victim of the Platonic distortion of Christianity, but may well be the most sorely afflicted. Thus Vladimir Soloviev's philosophy of pan-unity, which was the source of inspiration for practically all other trends in Russian religious thought, is based on Plato's vision of ideal unity, progressively incorporated into the diversity of earthly entities, which reveals the closeness of Soloviev's theocratic utopia to Plato's ideocratic republic.

It is true that Soloviev and his philosophical followers (sometimes strongly critical about their teacher), such as Sergei Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky, and Aleksei Losev, tried to overcome or improve the one-sided idealism of Plato with notions of "religious materialism," "concrete idealism," or "Sophiology." These improvements presupposed that the world of ideas must manifest and embody itself materially in the same way that Christ-God became Christ-Man. Khoruzhii points out, however, that the relationship between God and man in Christianity is not the same as the relationship between ideas and objects in Plato. According to the teachings of Eastern Church Fathers, God and man are absolutely different by essence (idea), but communicate through energies (existence, volition). Therefore, genuinely Christian philosophy would abandon such Platonic and neo-Platonic conceptions as the total unity of an ideal world and would focus instead on existential intercourse between man and God, meditating on such spiritual processes as prayer, repentance, grace, introspection, silence, the unification of mind and heart—those acts of free will that truly mediate between the human and divine as distinct entities. The Platonization of Christianity resulted in the loss of these existential truths and in utopian temptations of Russian thought: since the idea is a principle of abstraction and generalization, it was believed that the entire world should be united on the basis of universal ideas.

One cannot but agree with Khoruzhii's exposure of the Platonic origins of Russian religious idealism, though he seems to underestimate the Platonic and neo-Platonic influences even in those Eastern Church Fathers who are presented in his conception as the staunchest Christian opponents

of Platonism.[11] According to Sergei Khoruzhii, genuinely Christian philosophy would abandon such Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions as the "total unity" and "divine essence of man." It would focus instead on existential intercourse between man and God, meditating on such spiritual processes as prayer, repentance, grace, introspection, silence, the unification of mind and heart—those acts of free will that truly mediate between the human and divine as distinct entities. Thus, Christian energetism will take the place of Platonic idealism.

Christianity, in opposition to Platonism, does not impose such universal goals as "Godmanhood" (Soloviev's basic concept) on all of humankind, but rather is concerned with the unique dynamic of personal volition and the acquisition of grace. For this reason Khoruzhii believes that the "energetical" or existential core of the Orthodox tradition must still be reexamined and restored, as the premise on which the future of Russian religious philosophy can be built.

Thus, two distinct and evidently incompatible projects are advanced for the reform of Russian philosophy: one (Barabanov's) calls for its complete secularization, its differentiation from theology and ideology; the other (Khoruzhii's) suggests an even closer, deeper alliance with the doctrinal and ascetic core of Orthodox Christianity. What both solutions have in common is their rejection of the Platonic dominance in the Russian philosophical tradition, both in its explicit form (religious idealism) and in its undercurrents (Marxist ideology).

## NEW METAPHYSICAL RADICALS

The development of Russian thought from the 1950s to the 1980s clearly testified against materialist ideology and communist ideocracy. However, the years following the collapse of the Soviet system witnessed a resurgence of the Platonic type of ideocratic discourse, which expresses even more radical tendencies than did Russian philosophy of the early twentieth century. We use here the term "radicalism" in the same sense that allowed Karl Popper to apply it equally to Plato and Marx: "[U]ncompromising *radicalism*. . . . Both Plato and Marx are dreaming of the apocalyptic revolution which will radically transfigure the whole social world."[12] The material substance of Russian historical existence is now so exhausted by ideocratic experiment, so rarefied that the kingdom of absolute ideas again rises up beneath its translucent surface, tempting thinkers to construct new systems of panunity, to accommodate heaven on earth. Evgenii Barabanov observes: "[I]n a situation of an acute identity crisis, in the anguished attempts to restore the torn threads of forgotten traditions, the *ideological* and *utopian* paradigms of Russian philosophical thought are acquiring a second life. Again

the 'Russian idea'! Again the 'special way,' again 'originality,' again doctrinal preaching instead of the pupil's desk."[13]

Indeed, if we attempt to summarize the most recent developments in Russian thought, we discover a general tendency for the radicalization of its metaphysical ambitions. This tendency may be identified in such diverse movements as Marxism, with the eschatological communism of Sergei Kurginyan; nationalism, with the radical traditionalism of Aleksandr Dugin; religious philosophy, with the increasing popularity of Nikolai Fedorov's Cosmism and Daniil Andreev's "interreligious" teaching of The *Rose of the World*. Even the movements that would seem to be the most resistant to metaphysical assumptions, such as Structuralism, culturology, and conceptualism, reveal a growing propensity for universalist claims. For example, the later works of Yuri Lotman and Vasily Nalimov are rife with a metaphysics of chance, contiguity, indeterminism. Georgy Gachev builds much more ambitious cosmosophical constructions than did his predecessors in culturology, Bakhtin and Likhachev. The conceptualist group "Medical Hermeneutics" is much more concerned with metaphysical generalizations than were the conceptualists of the 1970s and 1980s. Is it a coincidence that this proliferation of new, radical metaphysical discourses has arisen with the degradation and collapse of the ideocratic system of Soviet power?

I must reiterate that the Soviet system was not merely a political and legislative entity but was founded on a metaphysical, even eschatological, vision, officially called Marxism but stemming also from the prophetic philosophizing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hence the collapse of the Soviet regime left something more than just a need for governmental reform: it left a metaphysical vacuum, eager to be filled. If the prevailing mood among intellectuals in the late Soviet period was to challenge and demystify ideocracy, then the collapse of that ideocracy generated numerous emulations and simulations among various intellectual groups, which attempted, at least in theory, to build a new ideocratic regime on a more firm, nationalistic, technological, and/or religious foundation. Traditionally in Russia, political platforms have been constructed on a framework of the most general, "filosofical" ideas; in the early 1990s, competing metaphysical theories were rushing in to fill the demolished and excavated site with a foundation for a new political architecture. The death of one "big" totalitarianism gave birth to a number of smaller ones. Many politicians, of both leftist and rightist orientation, including the leaders of the most powerful Parliament parties, such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky of "Liberal-Democratic Party," Dmitry Ragozin of "Rodina," and even the communist leader Gennady Zyuganov more or less consistently wielded metaphysical ideas to justify their ambitions for intellectual leadership.

This overall tendency, characteristic of the Russian mentality in general but aggravated in the 1990s by increasing political instability, can be called

"metaphysical radicalism." Political radicalism flows from the very core of this type of metaphysics, which, following Marxist paradigm does not limit itself to explaining the world but attempts to change it. At the same time, any politics with pretensions to radically transforming the world cannot limit itself to the social, economic, and legislative dimensions, but must entail metaphysical assumptions. In the contemporary West, politics usually pursues less expansive goals of partially improving existing systems, and therefore, it is divorced from metaphysical considerations, or at least pretends to be. Since Russia's historical dynamics are not evolutionary but disruptive and catastrophic, each break in political continuity necessitates renewed metaphysical speculation and indoctrination designed to justify the entirely new social order. It is the privilege of metaphysics to address the world as a whole, as it is the objective of political radicalism to transform this whole completely. Thus metaphysical and political radicalism are mutually dependent, as the totalitarian experiments of the twentieth century have shown: both communist and fascist radicalism advanced strong metaphysical claims and implications. Russian philosophy, which during the 1950s to 1980s had resisted the stranglehold of Soviet ideocracy, may now be preparing the foundation for a new type of ideocracy, potentially based on the ideas of Cosmism, universal theocracy, radical traditionalism, or eschatological communism. The options are varied.

Metaphysical radicalism is a specific type of philosophical discourse that ignores the Kantian critique of metaphysics and claims to "transcend" the epistemological limits imposed on human cognitive capacities. It relies on "revealed," "self-evident," or "generally accepted" truth or values that are directly accessible for human mind. However, this philosophical mode cannot be identified with the naive metaphysics that Kant criticized; it aspires not to adequate knowledge but to the practical transformation of the world, not to truth but to power. For metaphysical radicalism, epistemological limits remain effective, but irrelevant, since they can be transcended politically, volitionally, as the projection of a different world is implemented by the forces of social, national, and technological revolution. This is not a precritical, descriptive but a postcritical, prescriptive metaphysics, one that draws on suppressed desires and taps the collective unconscious. Western intellectuals are familiar with this type of fiery speculation through the works of New Left thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse, but the principal distinction of the majority of contemporary Russian "New Right" thinkers is their appeal to the absolute past, to the resurrection of ancestors or the restoration of tradition.

It is known that sentences in the imperative mood cannot be subjected to the criteria of verification. As Roman Jakobson puts it, "The imperative sentences cardinally differ from declarative sentences: the latter are and the former are not liable to a truth test."[14] "Do this!" as distinct from "She or he

has done this" or "This is done," cannot be challenged by the question "Is it true or not?" The same may be said of "metaphysics in the imperative mood," which, unlike the "indicative mood" of pre-Kantian metaphysics, evades critical challenges to its truthfulness. Kant's critique of philosophical dogmatism was crucially conclusive in respect to metaphysical "declarations," but to what extent can it help to demystify the metaphysical "imperatives" that began proliferate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries precisely as a result of Kantian limitations on theoretical reason?

The alliance between metaphysics and politics has benefits for both of them: as *practice*, it concentrates on one goal, on one direction of change; as *philosophy*, it posits itself beyond truth and falsehood. A diversity of positions is possible in philosophy only insofar as it interprets the world, but the task of changing the world leaves one position—the one that is sanctioned as correct and mandatory. One of the most famous Karl Marx's statements on the tasks of philosophy is his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." There is a curious asymmetry in this proposition: the transition from "interpreting" to "changing" is achieved at the price of "variability" which is dropped in the second part of the thesis. It is possible to *interpret* the world *in various ways*, but presumably there is only one way or direction of its practical transformation. This is how totalitarian implications are inherent in the very project of the philosophy as the practical/political action.

There are strong tensions, originating from diverse ideological sources, among the representative trends of metaphysical radicalism. For example, radical traditionalists inspired by such extreme rightist thinkers as René Guénon (1886–1951) and Julius Evola (1898–1974), condemn Fedorovian Cosmism as a leftist, technocratic heresy obsessed with the idea of progress and active, self-governed human evolution. Neofascist ideologists of Zhirinovsky's camp condemn radical traditionalists for their romantic alienation from the contemporary scene and their obsession with the past.[15] Nonetheless, these antagonisms serve to underscore the substantial unity of metaphysical radicalism, not in the specific contents of the individual projects that fall within its scope, but in the very mode of imperative thinking that establishes a set of ideas about what the world *should* be, while utterly rejecting the world as it is. Fedorov, the founder of Russian Cosmism, wrote, "[P]hilosophy must become the knowledge not only of what is but of what ought to be, that is, from the passive, speculative explanation of existence it must become an active project of what must be, the project of universal action."[16] Not only Fedorovians but radical traditionalists and neo-Marxist utopians could subscribe to this statement of what philosophy should do in the face of the world problems and what the world should become in the name of philosophical ideas. The formula for the political implications

of this metaphysical radicalism can be found in Nietzsche's prophecy: "The time of the struggle for domination of the globe is upon us; it will be undertaken in the name of basic philosophical teachings."[17] Russian metaphysical radicals invoke as model the fate of Nietzsche's own teachings: German recruits going into the trenches of the First World War with volumes of *Zarathustra* in their rucksacks.

The ideological incompatibility among Marxist, nationalist, and religious discourses, which sharply divided them in the Soviet period, now becomes more and more irrelevant as these positions merge in the overarching type of radical discourse. Consider the words of Sergei Kurginyan, one of the chief ideologist of post-Marxist revival of communism who was the principal political advisor of the conservative, procommunist forces in the Soviet leadership that organized the failed putsch of August, 1991, and attempted to preserve the Soviet Union as a communist superpower: "We regard communism not only as a theory but as a new metaphysics which leads to the creation of a new, global religious teaching. . . . It contains many fundamental features vitally important for civilization, features of a new world religion with its own saints and martyrs, apostles and creed. . . . Among the indisputable predecessors of communism we identify Isaiah and Jesus, Buddha and Lao Tse, Confucius and Socrates. . . . Today there is no alternative to the communist meta-religion."[18] Further, Kurginyan insists that Russia, since its ancient history "has experienced a need for an idea with global-messianic potential capable of unifying Eurasia. She found this in communism. . . . The red field, Communist eschatology and Communist mysticism existed, exist and will exist in Russia and, most probably, these ideas . . . will find their place within Eurasian expanses, merging with Orthodox, Sufi, Buddhist, and possibly, Catholic mysticism."[19]

This example of the discourse of "metaphysical radicalism" reduces or even erases any difference among communist, nationalist, and religious rhetorical strategies. Another example comes from the leader of the Communist party, Gennady Zyuganov, the strongest contender for Russian political and ideological leadership in the 1990s: "From the standpoint of ideology and world view, Russia is the keeper of the ancient spiritual tradition: its fundamental values are *sobornost'*[20] (collectivism), the supreme power of the state [*derzhavnost'* ], sovereignty [literally: self-sufficiency of statehood], and the goal of implementing the highest 'heavenly' ideals of justice and brotherhood in earthly reality."[21] Within *a single sentence*, phrases imbued with religious meaning—"spiritual tradition," "*sobornost'*" and "heavenly ideals," merge together with "*derzhavnost'*" and "statehood," taken from the vocabulary of nationalists, and with "collectivism" and "brotherhood," the key words of communist jargon.

Thus we can single out metaphysical radicalism as one of the most powerful tendencies in contemporary Russian thought, as a kind of meta-

discursive strategy transcending the ideological differences among previously oppositional movements.

## CONCEPTUALISM

Another major strategy that shares the contemporary intellectual scene with metaphysical radicalism is conceptualism.[22] Like its counterpart, it suggests a universal mode of speculation: a critical attitude toward traditional notions of reality and an ironic playfulness with regard to the sign systems of various ideologies that empties all metaphysical assumptions of their contents to reveal the bare skeleton of abstract discourse contingent on a system of arbitrary beliefs. Conceptualism exposes the "realistic fallacy" of all "master discourses," discloses the contingency of all concepts, and refuses to ground itself in any reality. As Il'ya Kabakov, the leading representative of Russian conceptualism in art and theory, puts it, "Precisely because of its self-referentiality and the lack of windows or a way out to something else, it [the concept] is like something that hangs in the air, a self-reliant thing, like a fantastic construction, connected to nothing, with its roots in nothing."[23]

Initially, the name "conceptualism" was borrowed from the international aesthetic school founded in late 1960s by the American artist Joseph Kosuth. Conceptual art from the very beginning was connected with philosophy and even claimed to be more intrinsically philosophical than academic philosophy itself. Kosuth insists that, "The twentieth century brought in a time which could be called 'the end of philosophy and the beginning of art.' . . . Art is itself philosophy made concrete."[24]

Two lines of argument intersect in this statement. On the one hand, it implies that twentieth-century art is no longer limited to the creation of material forms but begins to question the very nature of art and to redefine it with each specific work. Art, therefore, becomes an articulation of ideas about art. "'Conceptual Art' merely means a conceptual investigation of art."[25] On the other hand, analytical philosophy, as Kosuth proposes, has refuted any claims by philosophy to enunciate the truth, to make verifiable propositions about the world, and reduced the task of philosophy to the analysis of its own language. Therefore, philosophy has lost its privileged "scientific" status and its claims to universal truth; in our "post-philosophical" age, its function passes to art, which creates new concepts, signs and languages without assuming their credibility. These two processes, the conceptualization of art and the aesthetization of philosophy, contribute to a mutual rapprochement and the redefinition of conceptual art as a concrete philosophy that objectifies and relativizes its own ideas.

Another source of the term "conceptualism," less evident but perhaps more decisive for the fate of this movement in Russia, is the medieval

philosophical school of the same name. Among the European scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, conceptualism functioned as a moderate version of nominalism, which asserted that all universals have their being not in reality itself but in the sphere of purely mental concepts. As such, this school was opposed to realism, which posited one continuum of physical and conceptual reality, insisting on the ontological being of such universals as love, soul, beauty, goodness, and other general concepts. Strange as it may seem, an analogous confrontation of two intellectual trends occurred in the late Soviet period, with Marxism insisting on the historical reality of such general ideas as "class," "the people," "collectivism," "equality," "history," and "progress," while conceptualism argued for the purely nominative and mental basis of these ideological constructions. Like its medieval counterpart, conceptualism attempts to expose the realistic fallacy that attributes objective existence to general or abstract ideas. Whereas the Soviet system gave the status of historical reality to its own ideological pronouncements, conceptualism attempted to expose the contingent nature of these concepts by unmasking them as constructions proceeding from the human mind or generated by linguistic practices.

The origins of Russian conceptualist discourse can be traced to the works of the philosopher, writer, and literary critic Andrei Siniavsky, particularly to his treatise "On Socialist Realism" (1959). Instead of either praising socialist realism as the "truthful reflection of life" (in the words of official Soviet criticism) or condemning it as a "distortion of reality and poor propagandistic art" (in the words of dissident or liberal Western criticism), Siniavsky suggested the artistic utilization of the signs and images of socialist realism, while maintaining a playful distance from their ideological content.

Among leading representatives of Russian Conceptualism in the 1970s to 1990s one could name, in addition to Andrei Siniavsky and Il'ya Kabakov, artists and essayists Vitaly Komar and Aleksandr Melamid, poet and theorist Dmitry Prigov, and philosopher and art critic Boris Groys. Conceptualism may be viewed as a Russian version of postmodern and poststructuralist discursive strategy which undermines the credibility of any system of thought by exposing it as a self-enclosed chain of significations with no outlet to reality. From a conceptualist standpoint, a "concept" is any idea—political, religious, moral—presented as a pure idea, without reference to its real prototype or any possibility of its actual implementation. That is why conceptualism, as a philosophy, is so closely connected with art: the idea is used in its aesthetic capacity, as a playful and self-sufficient verbal statement or visual projection whose practical or political application are revealed as delusions. With conceptualism, any fact, gesture, object, or work of art is exposed as a "concept," that is, a mental act that ironically contemplates its own materialization

as contingent on speculative conventions. Thus the field of philosophical reflection expands infinitely, subsuming all kinds of concrete objects and facts and treating them as mental constructions, as general concepts, in such a way that these concepts claim their existential and material status and simultaneously expose the counterfeit behind these claims.

Conceptualists view totalitarian thinking, with its claims of all-encompassing truthfulness, as a kind of madness: a network of internally connected though arbitrary propositions presumed to coincide with external reality. When considering more properly philosophical ideas, conceptualism playfully paraphrases metaphysical discourse using Hegelian, or Kantian, or Marxist rhetorical models for the description of such trivial objects as flies or garbage. This is not merely an attempt at the ironic deconstruction of traditional philosophy—it is also a project for the proliferation of new, multiple metaphysics, each of which consciously demonstrates the contingency of its central concept, be it Absolute Spirit in Hegel's work or a fly in Kabakov's treatise "The Fly as a Subject and Basis for Philosophical Discourse."

In contrast to radical metaphysics "in the imperative mood," conceptualist simulative systems of thought could be called "metaphysics in the subjunctive mood," which also serves to distinguish it from pre-Kantian dogmatism, or "metaphysics in the indicative mood," with its claims of adequately describing reality as such. Kabakov argues that any object, however ordinary and trivial, can rightfully be placed in the center of a philosophical discourse, becoming its master concept, the universal "first principle":

> The work presented here, the treatise "The Fly with Wings" almost visually demonstrates the nature of all philosophical discourse—at its base may lie a simple, uncomplicated and even nonsensical object—an ordinary fly, for example. But yet the very quality of the discourse does not suffer in the least as a result of this. In this very way it is proven (and illustrated) that the idea of philosophizing and its goal consists not at all in the revelation of the original supposition (if this can turn out to be an ordinary fly), but rather in the very process of discourse, in the verbal frivolity itself, in the mutual suppositions of the beginnings and ends, in the flow of connections and representations of that very thing.[26]

In addition to demonstrating the contingency of metaphysical systems, Kabakov accomplishes two other closely related philosophical tasks. By contrasting the superficiality of the topic with the gravity of his chosen genre, Kabakov not only deconstructs the methodology of serious philosophy, but elevates the trivial to the status of a topic worthy of philosophical meditation. The same device that allows him to deconstruct traditional philosophy, also serves to construct a new range of philosophies that can assimilate the words and concepts of ordinary language in all its infinite

richness. This pan-philosophical approach can also be applied to such concepts as "chair" or "table" or "wall," identifying them as potential universals that may provide a more vivid elucidation of the world than such traditional and almost empty concepts as Spirit or Life or Being. The proliferation of metaphysical systems within conceptualism is conceived as a way to overcome the metaphysical dimension of discourse, not by the means of serious analytical criticism (as in Wittgenstein or Derrida), but through the self-ironic, self-parodic construction of systems that deliberately disclose their own contingency.

Conceptualism, as postmodernism on the whole, is sometimes criticized for its aesthetic snobbery and moral indifference (consider Solzhenitsyn's invectives against "spiritually impotent" postmodernism in the early 1990s). But Russian conceptualists, not unlike their Western allies, emphasize the moral implications of philosophical contingency, which undermines totalitarian and hegemonic discourse and promotes self-irony as a mode of epistemological humility. Russian culture proved to be a fertile ground for the application of conceptualist theory, owing to the prevalence of ideological schemes and stereotypes throughout its history, especially during the Soviet period. In the West, the correlation between sign systems and observable reality has been persistently validated through scientific research and economic practice; while in Russia, reality itself has traditionally been constructed from ideological signs generated by ruling minds. For this reason, conceptualism may be viewed as the predominant Russian-Soviet mode of thinking, as the self-awareness of nominalist and conceptualist practice underlying Russian history, especially its ideocratic institutions.

The Russian version of conceptualism established a theoretical distance between itself and a great number of metaphysical schemes, potentially totalitarian and hegemonic discourses that dominated late Soviet and early post-Soviet culture, including Marxist, nationalist, mystical-esoteric, and other "grand" and "fundamental" discourses. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, as the official ideology lay in ruins, the critical sharpness and topicality of conceptualism diminished for a while, but conceptualists did not remain jobless for long: other ideologies (religious fundamentalism, national messianism, etc.) came to contend for the "yawning heights" of the State ideocracy, and their rhetoric escalated to such a degree of automatization and self-repetition that conceptualism could set about "working" with them.

If in the 1970s to 1980s conceptualism was neatly opposed to more academic and serious types of humanistic discourses, such as neorationalist or culturological, the 1990s have witnessed a strong tendency for their consolidation. Just as Marxism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism have begun to gravitate toward a unified discursive strategy of metaphysical radicalism, so do structuralism, culturology, and conceptualism, which

were clearly divided in the 1970s to 1980s, tend to comprise a unity in opposition to metaphysical radicalism. This unity is based, first and foremost, on the poststructuralist notion of the cultural relativity and contingency of all discourses—the theoretical tenet that was not alien to structuralism and culturology but was most consistently and convincingly articulated in conceptualism.

Thus, in the mid-1990s, one can see a sharp polarization of radical and poststructuralist (or conceptualist, in the broadest sense) types of discourses with simultaneous neutralization of the internal ideological differences within both of them.

## CONCEPTUALISM VERSUS METAPHYSICAL RADICALISM

One can compare the relationship between Russian conceptualists and metaphysical radicals with the division of "ironists" and "metaphysicians" among Western intellectuals, as described by Richard Rorty. "The metaphysician is someone who takes the question 'what is the intrinsic nature of (e.g., justice, science, knowledge, Being, faith, morality, philosophy)?' at face value. He assumes that the presence of a term in his own final vocabulary ensures that it refers to something which has a real essence. . . . The ironist, by contrast, is a nominalist and a historicist. She thinks nothing has an intrinsic value, a real essence." The position of ironists is summarized in this way: "never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves."[27] If the metaphysician's "final vocabulary" includes such concepts as "true," "good," "right," "the Church," the Revolution," "professional standards," "progressive," "creative," and so forth, then the terms preferred by the "ironist" are those that denounce the very possibility of "final vocabulary," including "perspective," "conceptual framework," "historical epoch," "language game," "redescription," "vocabulary," and "irony." The ironists share the conceptualist position in relation to "eternal values," "self-evident truths," and "global imperatives" as advanced by metaphysical radicals.

However meaningful, this parallel with Western intellectual types needs certain corrections. Russian metaphysical radicals are not just "metaphysicians" in Rorty's sense, that is, "realists" opposed to "ironists" as "nominalists." Metaphysical radicals not only believe in "real essences," they summon us to transform the world in accordance with their vision of these essences. As for conceptualists, they are not only "aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves"; they purposefully and sometimes aggressively eliminate and ridicule all existing

vocabularies, directing their "redescriptions" against both "rightist" and "leftist" metanarratives whenever these lay claim to "intrinsic values."

This "extremity" on both sides, metaphysical radicalism and conceptualism, certainly deepens the split between these intellectual positions and diminishes the chances of their mediation and neutralization in the framework of a purely scientific or scholarly discourse. On the surface, metaphysical radicalism and conceptualism seem wholly incompatible, even antagonistic, since the former pushes the seriousness of metaphysics to the extreme of prophecy and propaganda, while the latter reduces it to an act of linguistic buffoonery. Indeed, metaphysical radicals have nothing but contempt for "futile" and "foolish" conceptualist games, whereas conceptualists pointedly ridicule "dangerous" pretensions of philosophically intoxicated radicals.

But, essentially, the current radicalization and conceptualization of metaphysical discourse may be regarded as two aspects of the same process. The more radical metaphysical assumptions become, the more they reveal their potentially conceptualist nature. It is not by chance that Russian conceptualism emerged as the ironic duplication of the totalitarian discourse of Soviet Marxism: as new, post-Marxist modes of radical discourse become politically influential, conceptualism easily assimilates them for its ironic repertoire of empty cultural codes.

The conceptualist component in contemporary Russian thought cannot be reduced to a merely parodic gesture. The point is that radical discourse itself increasingly reveals internal conceptual qualities; the more an idea is pushed to extremes, the more it exposes its lack of referent and the pure schematism of its abstract speculation. For example, on the political scene, the Zhirinovsky phenomenon may be explained as an intersection of radical and conceptualist modes, making him the equivalent of a "postmodern Hitler." The title of Zhirinovsky's autobiography-manifesto, *The Last Rush to the South*, could easily have been taken from the oeuvre of Dmitry Prigov's conceptualist verses. The very idea of Russian soldiers washing their boots in the Indian Ocean presents a combination of political radicalism (the Russian Empire stretched to the continent's Southern margin) and the aesthetics of conceptualism (an idea that is ruthlessly consistent in logical or ideological terms demonstrates its ridiculous irrelevance and folly).

The regeneration of totalitarianism after the death of totalitarianism cannot but incorporate a conceptualist self-subversive mediation. That is why new radicalism, from the very start, is doomed to be conceptually loaded, though rarely to the point of self-realization, unlike conceptualism in a proper sense. Some subtle observers find even in Zhirinovsky's extremist escapades a kind of conscious buffoonery that plays with the signs of aggressiveness rather than actually pursues it.[28] In most cases, however, radicalism acquires a conceptual dimension unintentionally, whereas conceptualism

quite purposefully engages into radical discourse and demonstrates both luxury and poverty of thus constructed metaphysical systems.

Such a deliberate symbiosis of radicalism and conceptualism may outline the perspective for a new Russian metaphysics, which will give a postmodern dimension to a traditionally Russian holistic, potentially totalitarian, way of thinking.[29] While Western postmodern discourse remains predominantly critical and self-critical, as seen in the pervasive influence of deconstruction with its demystifying and anti-metaphysical claims, Russian postmodern thought tends to emphasize its metaphysical disposition, finding *the antidote to metaphysical indoctrination in its very excesses*. Where Western thought prefers to mediate opposites and ground itself in "neutral," scientifically sound terms, Russian thought deliberately moves in the polar directions of excessive prophecy and relentless irony, pendulating between two opposites instead of attempting their rapprochement and stable synthesis.

One can imagine a kind of monolithic, though ambivalent, metaphysical discourse where the seam between radical and conceptualist ingredients becomes indistinguishable. The tendency for such symbiotic philosophizing is now evident both on the side of metaphysical radicalism, which cannot but locate itself in postmodern, post-totalitarian space, and conceptualism, which demonstrates an increasing proclivity for almost sincere, invariably grandiose and self-derisive, self-erasive metaphysical speculation.[30]

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Russian intellectual history is a history of thought that fights desperately to escape the prison of an ideocratic system created by the strenuous and sacrificial efforts of thought itself. What makes Russian thought so unique is its internal tension, its struggle against itself, against its own ideational constructions and social extensions. Truth seeking intelligentsia and power seeking ideocracy—both belong to the same breed of the Russian credo: "thought is power" This is how Francis Bacon's "knowledge is power" has been transcribed into the language of Russian ideologies. Thinking, unlike pure knowledge, constructs the powerful ideas that radically transform the world rather than adequately reflect it.

In the West, the field of philosophy is more or less clearly divided into ontology, the philosophy of being, and epistemology, the philosophy of knowledge. In Russia, such a division is almost irrelevant since philosophy addresses a conception of being that is itself constructed by thinking. Beginning with Chaadaev, and the Westernizers and Slavophiles, Russian philosophy focused on the secondary reality, one created by ideas. In Russia, thought tried to confront the triumph of thought. One speculative capacity, "intelligentsia," opposed itself to another speculative capacity, "ideocracy"—but the former also created the latter. This self-contradictory movement of thought, shattering its own foundations, gives an unprecedented,

sometimes "suicidal" quality to Russian philosophy. It may have been "derivative" and "secondary," but not so much in respect to Western thought, as in relation to properly Russian, ideologically produced, utterly artificial, fabricated, and fantastic reality.

Until now, Russia never played an important role in world philosophy, but philosophy did play an enormous role in Russia, especially in the twentieth century. Now that the system of ideocracy is not only theoretically deconstructed but, hopefully, historically transcended, one can envision the reversal of these tendencies. As philosophy will play a lesser role in a Russian society increasingly motivated by materialistic, economic goals, Russian philosophy, rethinking its unique experience of self-denial and self-liberation, may assume a more prominent role on the international scene.

## NOTES

1. Immanuel Kant, *Werke*, ed. Ernst Cassirer (1914), 6:456.

2. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1979), 39.

3. Gregory Skovoroda, "Socrates in Russia," in *Russian Philosophy*, ed. James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan, and Mary-Barabara Zeldin (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 1:17–18.

4. Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy," in Edie, Scanlan, and Zeldin, *Russian Philosophy*, 213.

5. Kireevsky, "On the Necessity and Possibility," 182.

6. I. V. Kireevsky, "O kharaktere prosveshcheniia Evropy" [On the Character of European Enlightenment], in *Kritika i estetika* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), 272.

7. *Sbornik statei v pamiat' stoletiia Imperatorskoi Moskovskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii* (Sergiev Posad, 1915), part 1, p. 153. Cited in A. I. Abramov, "Otsenka filosofii Platona v russkoi idealisticheskoi filosofii," in *Platon i ego epokha* [Plato and His Epoch] (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 222.

8. On the totalitarian implications of Platonism and its connection with Marxist philosophy, see Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). Comparisons of Marx and Plato are scattered throughout the book and can be followed in the index of subjects. In particular, Popper remarks, "The whole idea—which was not Marx's invention—that there is something behind the prices, an objective or real or true value of which prices are only a 'form of appearance,' shows clearly enough the influence of Platonic Idealism with its distinction between a hidden essential or true reality, and an accidental or delusive appearance" (2:165).

9. K. Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), 18.

10. L. A. Gogotishvili, "Mifologiia khaosa (o sotsial'no-istoricheskoi kontseptsii A. F. Loseva)," *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 9 (1993): 48, 49.

11. Thus, for Khoruzhii, the most authoritative source of Christian existentialism as opposed to Platonic idealism is Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), Orthodox monk, theologian, and intellectual leader of Hesychasm, an ascetical method of mystical prayer. One should not forget, however, that in his youth Saint Gregory mastered the classical philosophies of antiquity at the imperial university; according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "in his fusion of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, used as a vehicle to express his own spiritual experience, Palamas set a definitive standard for Orthodox theological acumen."

12. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1, *The Spell of Plato* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 164.

13. E. V. Barabanov, "Russian Philosophy and the Crisis of Identity," *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 48.

14. Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 68.

15. See, for example, the criticism of radical traditionalism in the neofascist journal *Ataka* (no. 12 [n.d.]: 32–34) whose editor, Sergei Zharikov, is the main ideologist and the minister of culture in the "shadow" government of Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

16. N. Fedorov, *Filosofiia obshchego dela*. Cited in V. V. Zenkovsky, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii*, vol 2. (Paris: IMKA-PRESS, 1950), s. 135.

17. F. Nietzsche, *Schriften und Entwürfe 1881–1885*. Werke/Hrsg. von F. Koegel. 2. Abt. Bd.12. (Leipzig, 1897), s. 110.

18. S. E. Kurginian, B. R. Autenshlius, P. S. Goncharov, Yu. V. Gromyko, I. Yu. Sundiev, V. S. Ovchinsky, *Postperestroika* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1990), 59–60, 66.

19. Sergei Kurginian, *Sed'moi stsenarii* (Moscow: Eksperimental'nyi tvorcheskii tsentr, 1992), 3:201, 228.

20. In Russian, the term *sobornost'* means "togetherness," "the spirit of communality" and has theological origin and connotations (the spiritual experience of Russian Orthodox Church). By adding "collectivism" as its synonym, Zyuganov wants to equate religious and communist views, which is one of the central points of his ideological program ("Christ as the first communist").

21. Published in the newspaper *Soviet Russia*, September 24, 1994.

22. On Conceptualism see Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture*, trans. Anesa Miller-Pogacar (Amherst: Massachusetts University Press, 1995), 30–37, 60–70, 200–203; Mikhail Epstein, *The Philosophical Implications of Russian Conceptualism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

23. Il'ya Kabakov, "Conceptualism in Russia," in *Il'ya Kabakov: Das Leben der Fliegen = Ilia Kabakov: Zhizn' mukh* (Cologne: Kolnischer Kunstverein; Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1992), 249.

24. Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966–1990* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991), 14, 52.

25. Kosuth, *Art after Philsophy*, 84.

26. Kabakov, "The Fly as a Subject and Basis for Philosophical Discourse," in Kabakov, *Zhizn' mukh*, 224.

27. Richard Rorty, "Ironists and Metaphysicians," in *The Truth about Truth: Deconfusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson (New York: A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book, 1995), 101, 102.

28. Elena Zheltova, "Vladimir Zhirinovsky: Carnival Barker" (a manuscript).

29. Already, a recent trend in Russian intellectual prose, exemplified by Dmitry Galkovsky's novel-treatise, *Endless Dead End* [*Beskonechnyi tupik*], indicates potential directions for the radicalist-conceptualist mode of thinking.

30. It is on the crossroads of radicalist and conceptualist discourses that this author situates some of his own writings, such as *New Sectarianism: The Varieties of Religious-Philosophical Consciousness in Russia* (Holyoke: New England Publishing Co., 1993; 2nd ed., Moscow: Labirint, 1994); *Great Sov': A Philosophical-Mythological Essay* (New York: Slovo/Word, 1994). Both books are in Russian.

# 2

# Asking for More: Finding Utopia in the Critical Sociology of the Budapest School and the Praxis Movement

*Jeffrey Murer*

Just as Gramsci predicted increasing levels of industrial development "would elevate the 'war of position' or ideological struggle over the 'war of movement' of the realm political institutional maneuver"[1] the U.S. response in particular to the 9/11 attacks has been to cast them in ideological terms. If the position of the "*jihadists*," for lack of a better term, is a utopian politics rooted in fantastical constructions of the traditional, in an imagined antimodernist past, what of the other side of the oppositional coin? What of an oppositional politics that confronts capitalism and its hegemonic frame of modernity with a promise of emancipation and human liberation rooted in the critical engagement of the sources of alienation, reification, and structural violence? In the West the long and embittered travail of Socialist and revolutionary movements into parliamentary parties characterized by dogma, coupled with the failure of the New Left to transcend institutional-parliamentary concerns and its subsequent melting into the self-help, new-age therapeutic fads of the 1970s all marked an abandonment of the transformative potential of the Marxist "ruthless critique of everything existing."[2] There is a philosophical lineage however, which remained committed to the Marxian concepts of emancipation from alienation, to the socialization of means of production, and to the promotion of a democratic society that included economic democracy. The critical sociology associated with students of György Lukács (otherwise known as the Budapest School) along with the *Praxis* movement in Yugoslavia, built on much of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School without abandoning the notion of action—particularly as praxis—and the possibility of realizing an emancipated human socialism. Rereading their critique of Realized Socialism, advanced industrial

society and technological rationality one can be struck by the continued salience of their vision. Lost in the cacophony of declarations announcing Marxism's (and more broadly socialism's) demise, these unapologetic Marxian voices may still offer an alternative for a democratic practice not yet realized. This chapter traces the roots of this Marxian opposition to Realized Socialism, exploring its philosophical origins in Lukács's notion of reification and the proposed alternatives for a radical democracy through a philosophy of praxis that remains relevant today.

## THE DICTATORSHIP OVER NEEDS

In 1973 many of the sociologists and philosophers who studied under György Lukács were banned from working in "scientific institutions" because of their hostility to the scientific socialism of Marxism-Leninism.[3] Faced with the prospects of working as a "pariah" cobbling together odd jobs by teaching language, working as a live translator or translating books three important members of the so-called Budapest School decided to emigrate and found themselves in Australia in the late 1970s. Once there Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller, and György Márkus decided together that they would write their critique of so-called Realized Socialism; their work culminated in their book *Dictatorship over Needs*. To the three of them what they had left behind in Hungary "no longer represented a 'perverted' or 'bureaucratized' socialism"; rather those environs appeared to them as a "hostile cosmos of new oppression."[4] They felt it was their "socialist duty to comprehend fully its oppressive nature and contribute to its alteration."[5] Further their proclaimed target audience was the Western Left. This was for two reasons; the first being the more practical: they did not believe their critique would be well received in Eastern Europe. Second, and perhaps more important, their critique was based in a broadly conceived Marxist framework. By the early 1980s in the West it had become rather out of fashion to pursue a Marxian critique, when a considerable proportion of Western Leftists were "at least indifferent, if not downright right hostile to Marx."[6] The authors claimed that the East European socialist opposition was not only anti-Leninist, but also should not appeal to leftists of any kind who are interested in a socialism as a radical democracy, not as a dictatorship of any kind. At the end of the Forward, the authors wrote: "We, all three, are convinced today that the world needs more, not less socialism than it has today."[7]

The central critique of the work is also an appeal to Western Leftists. The heart of the *Dictatorship over Needs* is a Marxian critique that is particularly concerned with the ways Realized Socialism continued to create an alienated society: workers alienated from the produce of their labor, society alienated from itself, humanity alienated from its species being. One of

the central criticism made by the three centered on the organization of the economy, namely the commitment to "scientific socialism through planning." Planning is not socialism. Just as Trotsky was a dissident critical of Stalin's five-year plans, the authors likewise suggest that Soviet planning was neither about rationality nor democracy. Rather planning was about bureaucratic control which itself becomes elitism, by giving bureaucrats privileged access to goods and services, and in this way extending inequalities. While Marx writes about nationalization he does so as a legal/political act giving a public character to property. Even so it is the socialization of the economy which represents the transformation of economic relations away from those of capitalism. In Marx's vision power is to be transferred to immediate producers to decide and dispose of collectively over the products of their labor. Soviet planning transformed nationalized, public property into state property, not the communal property of associated producers. In this the administrators of the state—the bureaucracy—came to dominate and control the means of production. One found a domination of politics over economy, or more accurately a domination of political elites over the economy. These elites come to enjoy luxury not because they control the economy but simply because they are elites with material privileges in a political system.

This was not state capitalism as some have suggested. Indeed private property was abolished and markets were liquidated. However at its most basic capitalism is an economic rationality that maximizes input/output relations. Capitalism is the transformation of input/output relations as the sole motivation for production whereby outputs are maximized with minimal inputs. Only when the means of production function to make a profit do they become capital. Or in more Marxian terms, the means of production are capital when as a social form of value they are begetting more value. This was not the case under the terms of Realized Socialism when often inputs flowed into channels that created fewer not greater outputs. Profitability, or output maximization, was expressly not the organizing consideration of production. According to Fehér and the others, as much as twenty percent of the growth in the gross national income between 1949 and 1955 was squandered on "ill-conceived, irrational projects, which were accepted by the leadership only to be revoked or abandoned later."[8]

This control of the bureaucracy extends further over both the objective and subjective aspects of labor power. With the destruction of the labor market—that is, without the labor-power transaction—the laborer is denied even this modicum of control over her body and subjective sense of power. Likewise, the promotion of full unemployment functionally meant that there were no unemployment protections or benefits. There was no escaping the forced labor system. Just as with property the organization of this system was not driven by production concerns but rather by political ones.

It was a system of totalizing logic: control of the economy and society by the political elites.

Just as the bureaucratic elite organized the economy to maximize their power and control, so too social sectors were reorganized to increase the realm of power for the bureaucracy. It was the "expropriation and monopolization" of all of the means of socialization and social organization by a single apparatus of power that was the goal function of the system.[9] Fehér and the others suggest that the dictatorship over needs is a political society "that suppresses the individual person and his free associations, free communities, his *kommunikationsgemeinschaft*" (i.e., civil society or in the Kantian sense, a community of sentiments).[10] This is a system that tries to dominate the operation and logic of all aspects of social/productive life.

> The mono-organizational society can operate only if control over productive activity is maximized. . . . Such a system seeks to deprive even the atomized consumers of all independence; it is then that the system tends to act as a brutal dictatorship over needs.[11]

This is similar to Marcuse's claim that an effective technique of totalitarian control is the integration of political opposition into a bureaucratized opposition. This is accomplished namely through the interpolation of political parties, and social organizations that once had the independent status of a free association. Perhaps the ultimate totalitarianism is the incorporation of everything into the bureaucratized structure, denying all access points for need articulation by the populace.[12]

In the case of the dictatorship over need, the "plan" for production is not even planned. Planning suggests some connection between natural resource availability and demand. In the dictatorship over need the power elite takes only arbitrary assessments "in complete separation from the only authentic fountainhead of relevant information: the individual and his autonomous associations."[13] This denial of access points for need articulation is part of the associative attempt to abolish civil society and thereby abolish the sphere of potential political opposition. For the Fehér, Heller and Márkus socialism is a society in which "the Marxian man rich in needs [has] the freedom to articulate them."[14] It is precisely this man who was denied in such a total way by the dictatorship over needs. This radical act of denial was part of an attempt to create a single community, homogenous by force and characterized by a "coerced togetherness."[15] Deprived of its heterogeneity and richness in diversity, a society forced together in such a way could no longer express solidarity, for such free associations and acts of unity were rendered both meaningless and impossible. Privacy, seen as anathema to forced togetherness, was drastically reduced if not banned all together. This was an attempt to eliminate the public/private divide by making a continuous public, as opposed to obliterating the distinction altogether as

an *aufhebung*.[16] Much of this criticism may yet be relevant under the terms of advanced capitalism.

Fehér and the others do acknowledge that the manipulation of needs that regularly takes place under capitalism, while highly problematic, is not the same as the dictatorship over needs. Such manipulation is the restriction of individual and collective freedom in the service of capital interests through the subjection of human creativity to the service of private enterprise. Nevertheless, manipulation preserves the *formal* freedom of choice, although it deforms the structure of needs.

> [A] total subordination of the workers' needs to the interest of capital's valorization is an inherent negative utopia of capitalist industrialization, rather than the real state of affairs characteristic of its liberal edition or a fully realizable tendency in the least liberal variation.[17]

These deformities can worsen over time, until whole sectors of need can no longer be articulated. It might be added that the *Dictatorship over Needs* was written, if not published, before the full implementation of Thatcherite economic policies in the United Kingdom or Reagan "trickledown" economics in the United States. The subordination of both workers' needs and human creativity has only increased over the past nearly thirty years.

The last few pages of the book are quite remarkable. In them the authors ask if liberal capitalism is a real alternative in Eastern Europe. While the authors claim that they are radical socialists, they also point out that Realized Socialism to them was not a socialism at all. If the regime of the "People's Democracy" was to be replaced there was no socialist achievement to be lost.[18] Pluralism and a free political life could be gained. On the other hand, the authors pondered what would occur if the Soviet Union suddenly collapsed, and they conclude that the "gigantic combined power of multinationals could incorporate and transform the Soviet economy," although the resulting "total, unchallenged world domination of American capitalism" is something the authors state that they would specifically reject.[19]

In the end, the authors, like so many others from the Budapest School, those from the Chartist movement in Czechoslovakia, and a number of intellectuals in East Germany, called for the implementation of a radical democracy. This would include economic democracy, workplace democracy, and informal political democracy. Similar calls had been coming out of Yugoslavia, by the Marxians of the *Praxis* group.

## PHILOSOPHY AS PRAXIS, *PRAXIS* AS MOVEMENT

In the first Issue of *Praxis*, the Yugoslav Marxist journal that ran from 1965 until 1975, Danko Grli  asked "[how] are we to develop Marxist thought at

all if we cannot in principle have different, even divergent views on some issues . . . ?"[20] This group of intellectuals and philosophers created an energetic and challenging publication that came out in two editions: one in Serbo-Croatian for a Yugoslav audience and an international edition with articles in English, French and German directed toward Western readers. The editorial board comprised an impressive collection of the leading Marxian and non-Marxian thinkers of the time.[21] The intent was not to represent Yugoslavia to a foreign audience, but to encourage international collaboration. This was also the very heart of Yugoslavism, as Pejović Petrović wrote:

> One cannot treat the problems of Croatia separately from those of Yugoslavia, nor can the problems of Yugoslavia today be isolated from the great problems of the modern world. Neither socialism nor self management is something narrowly national, and Marxism cannot be Marxism, nor can socialism be socialism, if they are enclosed in narrow national frameworks.[22]

This commitment to internationalism stood alongside the commitment to critique born of Marx's own commitment to a philosophy of critique. In a tract appropriately titled "*For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing*," Marx suggests the greatest task is to put religious and political questions in "self-conscious human form."[23] The way to make real change, he states, is to identify criticism with real struggles. Marx even introduces the notion of the immanent critique:

> We shall confront the world not as doctrinaires with a new principle: "Here is the truth, bow down before it!" We develop new principles to the world out of its own principles. . . . The reform of consciousness consists only in enabling the world to clarify its consciousness, in waking it from its dream about itself, in explaining to it the meaning of its own actions.[24]

For Marx the very critique of capitalist society began with the critique of its false and self-perpetuating concepts. This act of demystification was at heart of Marx's method of radical criticism. The *Praxis* writers wanted to do the same with Marxism. Yugoslavia of course was a special case among the political economies that enacted Realized Socialism. Its Communist government came from within, and was created by the simultaneous conflagrations of civil war, Nazi invasion, and occupation. Marshal Tito's vision of a truly internationalist Yugoslavia conflicted greatly with Stalin's vision of control throughout the Eastern half of Europe.[25] Elsewhere the regimes of Realized Socialism and even Communist parties in the West were still dealing with the challenges of de-Stalinization. Merleau-Ponty described this process of trying to find the essential Marx, to find what was before Stalin, as a "Herculean task."[26] The Praxis Marxists tried to harness all of the various interpretations and approaches to Marxism from Gramsci through Lukács,

from Bloch through Luxemburg, and systematize them in a philosophical project that would function as a "critique of all existing conditions," in a place where ostensibly Marxism was the dominant ideology.

One emphasis of this immanent critique was to examine the role of the historical subject as an agent of change; this was in stark contrast to the orthodox Marxist view which held that "objective conditions" were the primary factors determining both the course of historical change as well as the subjective desire of human actors. This position was one supported by the critiques offered by György Lukács and Rosa Luxemburg. Both saw capital as a social force, and likewise the direct independent action of the proletariat was the very source of its revolutionary consciousness. Luxemburg suggested that party or workers' political organization is much more likely to be the effect rather than the cause of a revolutionary process.[27] The self-organization of the proletariat as described by Luxemburg or the emphasis on class consciousness by Lukács suggests historical change itself is subjective, and in fact may be far from stable or constant. "Class consciousness does not advance according to mechanical laws."[28] The return of power to the proletariat makes social action all the more important. It is this spirit of social action from which the movement takes its namesake. The notion of a philosophy of praxis, one both highly theorized and enacted, becomes the form of action appropriate to isolated individuals seeking emancipation; praxis becomes an individual's ethics. It is as Marx describes it in his First Thesis on Feuerbach, a human sensuous activity.[29] This humanism is the heart of the critical power of Marx's work. Mihailo Marković described praxis as the means by which "man purposely changes his natural surroundings, creates various forms and conditions of social life, and creates himself by changing his environment"; it is when a "man realizes the optimal potentialities of his being."[30] Gajo Petrović described praxis as "the general structure of man's relationship with the world and toward himself: a universal-creative self-creative activity."[31] Praxis is the optimistic vision of humans making history, and they know why they are doing what they are doing. Marković and Petrović wrote that their philosophy "had to be radical" and "it had to be humanistic."[32] For Marx it is the very recognition of alienated labor that drives one toward praxis. It joins together in a worldview activity a consciousness of self, a consciousness of the community of humanity and one's membership within it, and a consciousness of nature and humanities membership within nature. The enactment of praxis it must take place within a community, for it is about the social act of situating one's self within that community and the world in general.

The Praxis Marxists were asking for a great deal. Immediately elements within the state and the party began to organize to oppose the *Praxis* group. Edvard Kardelj, a major figure in developing the Yugoslav critique of Stalinism, also wrote numerous pieces in the party's Central Committee official

journal *Socijalizam* warning that the "destructive criticism" of the Praxis Marxists was "disorienting the conscious forces of social development."[33] From the party's perspective the most dangerous aspect of the ongoing public critique lay in the conscious gap between the groups—the party and the *Praxis* group. These concerns continued reaching a fevered pitch in June of 1968, when after a series of student demonstrations in solidarity with strike actions of students in France and Italy, an overflow crowd from a student performance was met by riot police and a bloody clash ensued. Days later students occupied the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade and issued a series of serious and challenging demands, all of which were leftist, if not socialist in character. The demands did not represent a "radical" departure from officially articulated norms; rather they included the narrowing of social differentiation and the reduction of elite privileges; worker self-management that included shop floor democracy and not the mere formal inclusion of stock sharing schemes which the students saw as the harbinger of a return to a bourgeois organization of the means of production. The demonstrators called for the end to the "commercialization of culture, and a vast improvement in the quality of university life," which of course was the original demand that initiated the May demonstrations in France.[34] The most inflammatory demand was for the democratization of all social organizations including the League of Communists, the ruling party apparatus.

After these events a number of high ranking party officials looked for a way to contain the group. In 1972 the University Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia published an open letter calling for the dismissal of eight members of the Faculty of Philosophy, all of whom were core Praxis Marxists, including Mihailo Marković and Svetozar Stojanović. The Faculty of Philosophy was the center of Praxis activity, and many 1968 demonstrators were the students of *Praxis* Marxists. The circulation of *Praxis* jumped wildly for the rest of 1972 and into 1973 as the journal followed the plight of the so-called Belgrade Eight. After the University self-management committee voted unanimously to retain their colleagues, the party turned to the Serbian Parliament to pass a law finally dismissing all eight by legislative decree, riding roughshod over the entire university governance structure. In the autumn of 1975 the Central Committee declined to renew the funding for the *Praxis* journals, and with that the movement came to a momentary end. The journal would be revived in the West, mainly by the British Marxist who contributed to the first iteration, and would provide important running commentary on the changes on both sides of the Iron Curtain—reform and neo-liberalism—from 1981 until 1991. But in the years of the middle 1970s, as Tito tried to prepare for the eventuality of his death and continuity of Yugoslavia beyond him, he filled the ranks of the party with nonintellectuals who tended toward dogma or were increasingly ardent

nationalists. It is a ponderous counterfactual to imagine Yugoslavia in the 1990s with believers in participatory democracy and genuine primary producer self-management, rather than nationalist ideologues.

## THE GREAT REPUBLIC AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

In their book *Eastern Left, Western Left: Totalitarianism, Freedom and Democracy*, Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller claimed that free activity opposes all forms of oppression, including economic exploitation and social domination. They saw this free activity as being both anticapitalist and anti-Soviet.[35] This idea of freedom as the centerpiece for an emancipatory politics that is equally grounded in democracy and committed to egalitarianism can also be found in the writings of Leszek Kołakowski, especially his 1957 essay "The Meaning of the Concept of the 'Left.'"[36] In the essay Kołakowski deterritorializes the left suggesting that the category transcends borders. He suggested this was necessary as the left had ossified both in the West and in the East as a direct result of "Stalin's Crimes."[37] He called for the rejection of Marxism-Leninism, "scientific theory," and the stifling atmosphere of Stalinist bureaucratization. This was to be accomplished through the resurrection of the utopian dimension of politics.[38] By this he meant to create a "constantly querying of the dominant social imaginary." This is accomplished through praxis, or what Kołakowski refers to as the unity of a *vita contemplative* and a *vita active*. It also contained a moral imperative of the "ought." It is a praxis guided by a hopeful vision of the future. Keenly aware of Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kołakowski warned that the "utopian dimension" was also typical of National Socialism. To defend against the return of that dangerous and deadly ideology, he offered three substantive provisos: (1) this free political activity of the Left should be demonstratively anticapitalist in it orientation. (2) The Left should promote a republican nature, opposing social privilege, national dependence, and racism of any kind. (3) The Left should emphasize its relationship to the Enlightenment legacy as a project of emancipation.[39]

This emancipation is not derived from a general democracy. Rather it comes from a democracy of the everyday. The emancipating features of this free activity are found in the democratic self-government and self-management that unfolds at the most elementary levels of everyday life. The need for democracy in governance cannot be separated from need for democracy in production. That is economics cannot be examined in isolation. Similarly, the democracy of the everyday requires the constant presence of involved and active citizens. The same collective action that facilitates the social act of praxis facilitates participatory democracy. Just as praxis cannot be conducted in isolation, for it is a social act, democratic practice cannot be done

in isolation. This is in stark contrast to the "bourgeois democracy" which regularly reserves "democratic activities" for specific times, in limited space, for limited participants. Lukács himself stated:

> To my mind it is incorrect when many people oppose Stalinism with a general democracy—more accurately, bourgeois democracy. Marx described bourgeois democracy in the 1840s; it is built on the antithesis of the idealist citizen and the materialist bourgeois, and the inevitable result of the growth of capitalism is that the capitalist bourgeois comes out on top and the idealist citizen becomes his servant. By contrast, the essence of socialist development . . . is known by a name: workers' councils.[40]

While the inclusion of workers' councils as a tenant of contemporary democracy may seem like a radical idea, it can also be considered the full extension of the liberal principle of pluralism. If one considers the archetypes of political alternatives in Central and Eastern Europe today, they match closely to the hypothetical possibilities considered by Fehér in 1987. Most obviously there is a liberal option, the advocates of which, according to Fehér, often have only one concern: "the emancipation of civil society from the yoke of an oppressive state, and the restoration of a measure (optimistically a full system) of pluralism."[41] Notice the call is not for the emancipation of the citizenry or of the people more generally. While an open and vibrant civil society can foster liberation and human emancipation it does not guarantee such results. Moreover, pluralism can be realized merely as differentiation: differentiation of class, of citizenship status, or gender, of race. The democracy of the everyday calls for an extension of mutual recognition to all levels within civil society and the state. Workers' council simply facilitate that extension to the shop floor, just as housing associations would extend that democracy to the neighborhood, or the university committee might extend that democracy to students and faculty alike on campus.

The second option which has enjoyed considerable support throughout the polities of the former Soviet systems is a conservative and fundamentalist option. These "traditionalist" political elements are as equally hostile to state communism as they are workers' self-management. They often believe in "strong governments" receiving the support of nationalist consensus.[42] These negative egalitarian political movements—opposing large salary gaps created by capitalism but also opposing socialist redistribution—have formed or participated in government in each of the former Soviet satellite states, and they continue to receive wide spread support.

The third option would be the self-management of everyday democracy described above, in which egalitarianism is a practice and a social engagement that points out, highlights, and opposes inequality. This is different than treating egalitarianism as an achievable materialist goal; rather Fehér

suggests this type of commitment to egalitarianism is the implementation of a social warning system indicating concrete inequalities before they become enduring or systemic. This commitment to opposing inequality is a commitment to the social collective, to the whole.

Taken together these political developments can be likened to the "Great Republic" described by Agnes Heller in the pages of *Praxis International* in 1985.[43] Different from the democratic traditions in the United Kingdom or in the United States, this model of participatory democracy is premised on community involvement and the politics of the local. As Lukács suggested, councils become the political and social backbone of the community. Heller suggests that these councils be augmented with larger political institutions such as parliament. The two need not work at the other's expense. These councils are essential for the realization of self-management, real local political control. Moreover, these local councils reinforce the status of a person qua person as they are public social spaces which recognize the human quality of all of those participating within them. Second the councils bolsters the status of a person as a participating member of a social body; this is the dialectical counterpoint to being recognized as an individual human by being recognized as a member of the community. Lastly the councils promote the membership status of persons participating in a political body, and by extension an economic body. It is within the councils that some features of alienated labor can be overcome, through the recognition of producers qua humans.[44]

Much of this follows Rosa Luxemburg's also theorizing of the Great Republic. In addition to formal representation and local councils Luxemburg emphasized the spontaneity of movement as an important cornerstone to this social-political entity. The inclusion of this point suggests that Great Republic is also an open social space, with great comings and goings. The ability to move is as important to self-emancipation as unfettered labor. A second component of this spontaneity is the promotion of self-education through participation.[45] Once again, the praxis of emancipation, to overcome alienation, is achieved through social engagement, through citizen participation. These considerations indicate that the politics of the Great Republic are physical; they are sensuous, as they must be experienced and lived. Thus the democracy of the Great Republic is rooted in community, and as it is self-governing it takes a great deal of energy and effort. The democracy of the everyday requires participation every day. Heller suggests that the "Great Republic in not conceived as the utopia of the 'just society.'"[46] Rather the institutions and structure of society are prefigured to serve the community well. Thus it is a "civil" society.

The promotion of Marx's vision of praxis, as the means of overcoming alienation, transforms the Great Republic into a space of human emancipation. The unity of consciousness and action becomes the mechanism

by which humans drive history. Praxis itself as a history changing process empowers human. Far from being automatons waiting for the material conditions of the means of production to change, and thus move history, a philosophy of praxis both world transforming and self-transforming. Marx wrote of praxis: "coincidence of the changing circumstances and of human activity can only be conceived and rationally understood as a revolutionary practice."[47] This unity of affecting change and being conscious is the essence of sensuous human activity.[48] For Marx it is the essence of being human.

## CONCLUSION

Liberal democracy purports to emancipate through the individual's enjoyment of liberties and rights. However, if Fehér and others like Marcuse, are correct, the technological rationality associated with capitalism and promoted by liberalism transforms individuals into objects and obliterates their humanity. Soviet State Socialism did the same, and Fehér and Marcuse similarly commented on its brutality.[49] The antidote to these processes of objectification, they suggested, is to be found in the intersubjective community of participatory democracy. The Lukács School and the Praxis movement asked for more, for more democracy, for more humanity, and for more freedom. In many regards both of these movements heeded Kołakowski and offered a renewed vision of utopia: one rooted in the practice of democracy extended to everyday life. These positions are actually not so radical as they have their roots in Rousseau and are connected to the writings of Hannah Arendt, both of whom saw participation as the key to a healthy democracy. Yet, the proposition of the Budapest School and the Praxis movement to ask for more democracy in more sectors and at more times is a revolutionary vision, and one that remains attractive today. Rather than settling for the alienating and objectifying practices embedded within liberalism, the imminent critique of liberalism itself suggests that more democracy is not only desirable but also possible. To actually ask for more and to believe that human emancipation and self-actualization are realizable may be a utopian vision that can be achieved. The emancipation is in the work of building not in the achievement of completion; it is the praxis of building a free society that makes it free. This is an important critique for it attacks the instrumentality of both Western neoliberal capitalism and of Realized Socialism. It is not the ends that matter, but the practice of the means. This is even more than a critique, for this critique must be actualized and stands against those who criticize without action, or stand aside without participation. These philosophical traditions seek a reenchantment of the world through social intercourse and mutual cooperation. It is in trying to build a better, most just, more equitable world that makes all who

try more human. The works of these two often forgotten Marxian critiques and movements illuminate a path toward this lofty goal.

## NOTES

1. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 238–39.
2. From the title of an 1843 essay by Marx "For a Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing."
3. This was initiated by the so-called Philosopher's Trial, when academics were brought before a court to determine if their research was out of step with the Communist Party's interpretation of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.
4. Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller, and György Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs: An Analysis of Soviet Societies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), viii.
5. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, viii.
6. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, ix.
7. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, xiii.
8. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 58.
9. Andrew Arato, *From Neo-Marxism to Democractic Theory: Essays on the Critical Theory of Soviet-Type Societies* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 124. Cf. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 63, 66.
10. Arato, *From Neo-Marxism to Democratic Theory*, 124.
11. Arato, *From Neo-Marxism to Democratic Theory*, 124. Cf. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 88–89.
12. Realized Socialism never accomplished this level of totality. Resistance in the first economy, namely through alcoholism, absenteeism, and workers' camaraderie often worked to thwart such a high level of bureaucratization. Moreover, the primary economy required the secondary economy to provide certain services and good the political economy of the first would not or could deliver. This entire sector, an important part of the overall economy, was informal and therefore, by definition, beyond bureaucratization.
13. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 254.
14. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 258.
15. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 258.
16. This is dialectical synthesis of thesis and antithesis, where the two are not merely merged or combined. Aspects of the both thesis and antithesis are present in the resulting synthesis, but not in their own right. They are destroyed. I like to use the example of bread. Thesis flour and antithesis egg are synthesized to make bread. Both are present in the bread although neither can be discerned in its own right. The egg and flour are each completely destroyed, and yet both are present. The resulting synthesis of bread could not be made without one of the dialectical components egg or flour.
17. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 260.
18. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 298.
19. Fehér, Heller, and Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs*, 298.

20. *Praxis* 1 (1965): 49–58.

21. The Yugoslavs included Mihailo Djurić, Mihailo Marković, and Svetozar Stojanović; the international members of the Advisory Council included Zygmunt Baumann, Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, Jürgen Habermas, Leszek Kołakowski, Herbert Marcuse, and Enzo Paci.

22. "A quoi bon Praxis?" *Praxis* 1 (1965): 41–48.

23. Karl Marx, *For a Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing*, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 15.

24. Marx, *For a Ruthless Critique*, 15–16.

25. This particularly came to a head in 1948 when Tito and Stalin broke from one another. This rift dramatically undermined the support Tito had been giving Greek communists who at the time were engaged in their own civil war.

26. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 7.

27. György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1968), 41.

28. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 41.

29. Karl Marx, "These on Feuerbach," in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 107.

30. Gerson Sher, *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1977), 73.

31. Sher, *Praxis*, 73.

32. Mihailo Marković and Gajo Petrović, "Praxis: Critical Social Philosophy in Yugoslavia," in *Praxis: Yugoslav Essays in the Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Joan Coddington et al., ed. Mihailo Marković and Gajo Petrović (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel Publishing, 1979), v.

33. Sher, *Praxis*, 199.

34. Sher, *Praxis*, 210.

35. Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left: Totalitarianism, Freedom and Democracy* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International 1987), 15.

36. Leszek Kołakowski, "Der Simm dess Begriffes 'Linké,'" in *Der Mensch ohne Alternative* (Munich: R. Piper, 1960).

37. Kołakowski, "Der Simm dess Begriffes 'Linké,'" 15. It is important to remember how great Stalin's reach was. By demanding strict party discipline Stalin managed to maintain a tight grip on the Communist parties in the West. Stalin killed a Marxian revolution in Spain even before the workers there realize it is a revolution. He tightly controlled the Communist Party in France and believed that he should control all that was apportioned to him at the Yalta Conference because he held the French Communists at bay. Without directives from Moscow, the French Communists hesitated in organizing and attempting to take control of the means of production in the aftermath of World War II. See Ronald Radosh, Mary R. Habeck, and Grigory Sevostianov, *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), and see also Antony Beevor and Artemis Cooper, *Paris after the Liberation, 1944–1949* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

38. Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 15.

39. Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 16.

40. György Lukács, "Twin Crises," in *Marxism and Human Liberation: Essays on History, Culture and Revolution*, ed. E. San Juan Jr. (New York: Dell, 1973), 315.

41. Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 39.

42. Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 39–40.

43. Agnes Heller, "The Great Republic," *Praxis International* 5, no. 1 (April 1985). Cf. "The Great Republic," in Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 187.

44. Heller, "The Great Republic," *Praxis International*, 23–34.

45. Heller, "The Great Republic," in Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 188.

46. Heller, "The Great Republic," in Fehér and Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 200.

47. Marx, "These on Feuerbach," 108.

48. This is the premise, of course, of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (48); it is also the premise of *Eros and Civilization*, as Marcuse calls for the "eroticization" of labor (48). Cf. Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), and Herbert Marcuse *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

49. See also Marcuse's *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

# 3

# Aesthetics: A Modus Vivendi in Eastern Europe?

*Letitia Guran*

**1**

Eastern European literature produced during communism offers an interesting case study for testing the keenness of universal modernist aesthetic pronouncements and predictions against the historical and ideological backgrounds of the cultures which embraced modernism in the twentieth century. By studying the manner in which various modern Eastern European literatures responded to ideologization and censorship, one could see at work the oppositional, the negotiating, and also the complacent mechanisms that guided the reactions of one of the most exposed, visible, and consequential fields of the humanities during the communist epoch. My study provides an overview of the aesthetic perspectives embraced by Czech, Polish, Yugoslav, Hungarian, and Romanian writers before and after the fall of communism, in an effort to systematize the opinions on this unique twentieth-century Eastern European aesthetic phenomenon: the *resistance through the aesthetic*. My goal is to identify the historical circumstances which generated the founding mentality of aesth*ethics*, this specific Eastern European ethics of culture, which in some of these cultures became an ethics of existence.

First, one needs to note that writers such as the Czech Milan Kundera, the Polish Adam Zagajewski, and the Hungarian Danilo Kiš, among others, pointed out that nowhere in the world has literature been so widely read and nowhere has the presence of culture generated such a feeling of communion as in the former communist East Central European countries.

In 1990 Adam Michnik presented some of the reasons for this exceptional status of the field:

> Literature in our sphere had to take the place of sociological inquiries to record the truth about daily life. It had to take the place of political debate and function not unlike a nonexistent parliament. Finally it had to take the place of civil education and create the model of a citizen who wants to live in truth amidst lies and who wants to be free amidst bondage. (Budapest Roundtable 23)

Yet, fifteen years after the fall of communism, in the wake of Ideology Critique and Cultural Criticism, many question the anticommunist role played by the aesthetic model of *resistance through culture* in the name of more politically aware criteria. Thus, often in the Eastern European debates on these phenomena, the examples of Czech Jan Patočka and of the Yugoslav Korčula School, who fought for the implementation in the political life of their countries of *a philosophy of truth*, are opposed to the model promoted by Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica, which pleaded for the intellectual's *resistance through culture*, and life "outside history." Along with Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, who intently opposes "Patočka's way" to "Noica's way,"[1] critics like Caius Dobrescu and Christian Moraru question Noica's paideic model, claiming that, no matter how well intended and positive in its time, it has always been utopian, and thus inadequate to the realities of that age. Instead of the "critical intellectual," this model promoted the "charismatic intellectual," lost in utopia, unilaterally devoted to a vague ideal of culture.[2]

Taking these rather extreme interpretations of the *aesthetic way* as a starting point, I intend to explore the ethical potentialities of the aesthetic, according to some principles of Adorno's philosophy of art, which accounts for the possibility of bridging the gap between ethics and aesthetics. Instead of purely interpreting Noica's theory of *resistance through culture* as an inherently inadequate, flawed utopia, I would like to explore the modalities through which the aesthetic model could prove ethical qualities, in the absence of overt political efficiency. By unfolding the multiple meanings of the metaphor of *resistance through culture/the aesthetic,* I hope to shed light on the specific relationship between ethics and aesthetics during communism. This will implicitly reflect on the already large corpus of texts scrutinizing the problematic relationship between intellectuals and power during modernity, by adding a new chapter about the possibility of aesthetics as a politically efficient/ethical field under dictatorship.

Granted that in Eastern Europe between the 1960s and 1990s, many texts have been valued either in terms of pure aesthetics or in those of the moral attitude of their authors, my implicit assumption is that some of those texts which had a great public impact enjoyed such a high status on the basis on

their *aesthethic* qualities, which ranged from textual artistry, and subversive ideas, to a specific way of redefining the critical project of modernity in totalitarian circumstances. Through such texts, the aesthetic discourse became an important part of a specific Eastern European mode of responding to totalitarianism.

## 2

Before deciding whether intellectuals managed or not to effectively survive and/or resist communism by cultivating cultural and aesthetic values as a modus vivendi in East Central Europe after 1947, it is necessary to, at least attempt to circumscribe the semantic area of these concepts. My general understanding of the term follows Luc Ferry's, who, in *Homo Aestheticus* considers aesthetics as the field in which the sediments of a history of democratic individualism and subjectivity are most visible.[3] According to Ferry, the interconnection between the history of aesthetics and the history of democracy are retraceable to the very origin of aesthetics as a distinct domain. With its criteria rooted in the supremacy of taste, "this very essence of subjectivity, the most subjective within the subject," aesthetics represents the field within which the struggle of modern subjectivity to affirm itself is the most evident.[4]

Beginning with Kant, philosophers who decided to anchor an autonomous field of knowledge in a concept as volatile and intensely subjective as taste, implicitly acknowledged the individual subject as the ultimate recourse for aesthetic validation. As a consequence, the subjectivization of knowledge in the aesthetic judgments coupled with the postulate of the autonomy of the sensible in relation to the intelligible and ethics became the basis on which aesthetics turned into a symbol of individual autonomy. The high profile the field acquired in the eighteenth century, together with its somewhat idealized and overblown image in the late nineteenth century, made it possible for post-1947 Eastern European aesthetics to claim the ability to withstand the ideological impositions of the communist regime.

Due to its autonomous and individualistic overtones and to its high degree of visibility, some say that, in time and, somewhat unwittingly encouraged by the communist regime, the field became a favorite among the humanities in East Central Europe. So much so that even a writer like Václav Havel, whose reaction to communism was far from an exclusively aesthetic one, maintained that autonomous art can function as an alternative to a totalitarian system.

> The counterpart of oppressive political power is not an alternative political idea, but an autonomous, free humanity of man and with it necessarily also art—precisely as art—as one of the most important expressions of this autonomous humanity.[5]

By such statements which may have perpetuated a state of ambiguity by never clearly distinguishing the particular functions of art and politics under oppressive conditions, writers like Havel clearly pleaded for the political power of "artistic truth" and warned against the danger associated with its separation from means of sociopolitical expression of the truth.

> The degree to which politics is present or absent [in a text] has no connection with the power of artistic truth. If anything matters, it is, quite logically, only the degree to which an artist is willing, for external reasons, to compromise the truth.[6]

Despite such occasional clarifications, the coexistence between artistic truth and historic/social/political truth needed clearer rules for proper description and assessment. Whenever the artistic truth managed to assume a validity of its own, separated and above the general truth-requirement, on the basis of the autonomy of the aesthetic, some writers also managed to avoid the test of "reality" and join the aesthetic hierarchy on the basis of a "parallel" set of criteria.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that in Eastern Europe, a rather blurry and overblown image of aesthetics as beacon of autonomy and individual values persisted until after the fall of communism in the early 1990s, when writers from outside the communist bloc, most of them former exiles, and later a more and more consistent groups from within the Eastern European countries themselves began to question it.

Over the last decades, the argument against the validity of the *resistance through the aesthetic* has grown out of the conviction that it was impossible to effectively resist communism in any other way than by open public protest. In the case of literary works this could be accomplished either by dissident texts and/or acts of politic disobedience; all the rest was pretense or self-delusion. Given the draconic censorship, claim the defenders of this perspective, it was almost impossible to produce perfectly autonomous texts. When that happened, the texts could be suspected of either being too obscure and removed from the reality of communist oppression to have any bearing on it, or of being implicitly complacent with the degree of artistic freedom allowed by the status quo.

According to its most demanding critics, literary/philosophical texts under communism necessarily suffered from *the fallacy of autonomous writing*. Yet, today, I would say, such opinions suffer themselves from the fallacy of *political reading*, which posits that had these texts been truly autonomous, and thus valuable they would have engendered a different ethics in their receptors, an ethics able to push them toward direct political action during communism. Moreover, after the fall of the system, the readers of such texts would have instinctively known "the right way to go." In this sense, critics

like Paul Cernat and Caius Dobrescu claim that the moral shortcomings of today's society derive directly from the complacency induced by texts that addressed urgent issues (only) in metaphorical terms.

Though the accusation of self-sufficient aestheticism is not without merit, the assessment of its causes and consequences deserves some carefully considered nuances and a historical perspective. As Mircea Martin notes, "The idea of resistance through culture has at its origin a conversion of values. People talk and adopt a morals of literature, of culture because they refuse or avoid a heroic morals, the only really correct and necessary in the given situation."[7]

The reasons which led to this compensatory strategy are themselves complex and different from culture to culture in Eastern Europe, as are the degrees to which the *resistance through the aesthetic* and the choice of culture as alternative to totalitarianism substituted other forms of political and civic involvement. Before discussing them in detail, I should point out that my own reading of the "aesthetic debate" and assessment of the arguments coming from various camps is undertaken on the background of a revived and quite impetuous aesthetic debate in the American academia.

The intense questioning of the possibility of the autonomy of the aesthetic undertaken by cultural critics and postcolonial theorists since the late 1980s, coupled with the critique of the idealist eighteenth-century philosophical foundation of aesthetics has had major consequences in terms of the contents of academic curricula, the profile of humanistic education, and not ultimately, on the evolution of the job market in the humanities. In this sense, the post 1990 antiaesthetic revisionism has gone hand in hand with a denial of the relevance of the formalist critical methods which dominated the field of Western and American criticism since the years of New Criticism.

Given this rather conflictive context, I would like to proceed to a more detailed and culturally specific inquiry into what aesthetics, especially in its East Central European, resistant guise could signify.

## 3

To answer briefly what the *resistance through the aesthetic* might have meant for Eastern Europeans between 1947 and 1989, I would say that the phrase designated a strategy for hard times based on a substitution of functions between aesthetics and open political and social action. To this, I would add more controversial definitions circulated before 1989 by exiled Eastern European writers and after that, mainly by young generations. Such definitions include: "aesthetics as a savior and justifier of all things,"[8] "a deceitful strategy of self-justification,"[9] but also culture as a way of participating

"from the shadows in the destiny of a community, when other means of manifestation were suppressed," and also culture as "a strategy of preparing for the regeneration of the community; a highly subversive practice."[10] Along similar lines cultural resistance has been regarded as

> an opposition to intellectual death, a means of survival understood not like an opportunist and superficial accommodation to the given reality, but, on the contrary, like a profound subversion of the system due to the clinging to the values, which that very system wanted to destroy in order to succeed in its mission.[11]

Forced to negotiate these two opposite series of definitions, many analysts of the phenomenon introduced new concepts and circumstantial references in the debate. As a result, during the past five years, the concept of *resistance through the aesthetic* has been presented in more moderate terms, especially after the defenders of the aesthetic resistance conceded that "survival through culture" did not hope to defeat communism, but attempted to counteract it and to diminish its impact on the innermost core of the collective spirit.[12]

Also, Adam Zagajewski notes that for him and his generation "political opposition meant also an alternative process of education, where our literary masters were not only Kafka and Borges, but also and even more importantly Dante and Plato."[13] Such a situation explains why in his famous essay, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," Milan Kundera remarks that the revolts in the area

> were not stimulated by newspapers, TV and radio, that is, by the media. They were prepared, shaped and brought into being by novels, poetry, theater, cinema, historiography, literary magazines, popular comedies, cabarets, and philosophical discussions, which is to say, by culture.[14]

Furthermore, one has to admit that this impact, which was variable from country to country, was due in part to the remarkable courage and moral stature of writers such as Havel and the Charter 77 movement, Solzhenitsyn and Patočka, to cite just the first names that come to mind. Without their heroic political and civic attitudes, the impact of East Central European intelligentsia on the social and political life of the second half of the twentieth century might have declined dramatically, despite the traditional prestige of this class as beacon of democracy and freedom.

In a similar sense, the public success enjoyed by literary and philosophical organizations such as the Hungarian "Petöfi Circle," the Czech "Patočka Seminars," and the Yugoslav "Korčula Summer School," which demonstrated potential of evolving into civil rights debate groups and later into hotbeds of public protests, proved that literary and philosophical texts

could encourage self-reflection, increase critical awareness, and even propel to rebellion against oppressive systems.

Nevertheless, the opposite conclusion also holds true for the cases when aesthetic contemplation and philosophical debate and instruction resulted in the aestheticization of life. The case of Romanian writers and readers detailed by Mircea Martin is emblematic in this sense.

> As other fields and values lost the possibility to act, the aesthetic became more global and comprehensive. A kind of aesthetic hegemony, an implicit *pan-aestheticism* was tacitly installed over culture as a whole. The aesthetic perspective became supra-ordinary in the sense that it imposed its criteria without facing any resistance while also annexing the intellectual debate as a whole, whether in its philosophical, sociological, and ethical concerns. Nowhere else did the wide modernist definition of the aesthetic as anthropologic find a better and more pregnant illustration than in communist Romania during the 1970s and 1980s.[15]

Also in his famous *Captive Mind*, Czesław Miłosz details this phenomenon of the unavoidable "captive mentality" affecting those living under totalitarian regimes. The Hungarian Miklos Haraszti, author of *Worker in a Workers' State*, observes that "autonomous art has neither the inclination nor the strength to protect itself"[16] especially when the artists themselves are part of the superior echelons of power. Along the same lines, Paul Cernat, a young Romanian researcher, emphasizes the inherent ambiguity of the aesthetic autonomy in totalitarian conditions.

> In Ceauşescu's Romania, the aesthetic canon functioned as a relative counter-ideological power, as a tolerated, controlled alternative, and, in any case, as a replacement of the total freedom of expression, supported by the democratic exile, as was the case with other Central European countries. This aesthetic survived mainly due to its ambiguous status with respect to the guidelines of the Party, due to the writers' compliance with the rules of the game, and, moreover, due to the protection coming directly from the people of the Party. This ambiguous status was the source of a certain social prestige of the aesthetic, which the communist system tried to use in its own interest, while also controlling it.[17]

Given the fundamental ambiguity of the aesthetic discourse, which, according to the descriptions above, functioned both as an impetus for critical thinking and as an excuse for escapist attitudes, the question remains how did the ethical potentialities of the literary discourse manifest in East Central European countries during communism. Based on the examples of the texts that had a greater social impact and were also considered aesthetically valuable, can the researchers today establish a correspondence between the aesthetic value and the ethical effectiveness of a text or is the attempt itself an implicit manner of perverting the autonomy of the aesthetic judgment?

## 4

If one agrees with the fundamental postulate of Ideology Critique that aesthetics and politics have never been separate entities, and ideology has always been part of the literary texture, then the very understanding of the autonomy of the aesthetic has to be reformulated. The position has already been argued and the challenge already taken many times by now. Theodor Adorno is among those who managed to find a viable formula to discuss the sociopolitical message of the autonomous work of art.

Adorno's claim is that by investigating *the cracks* in the seemingly smooth surface of various cultural forms, the critic could trace the scars and sediments through which history imprinted its sociopolitical message in the artworks. Since art forms exercise their critical function precisely from within those *cracks*, the interpreter has to *attend to them* in particular in order to elucidate the sociopolitical meaning of the whole. Only by examining these ruptures, fissures, and discrepancies in the texture of literary discourse, could he or she come closest to restoring art its profoundly social and historical message while also acknowledging its aesthetic autonomy.

Moreover, granted that "the autonomous work is always sociopolitical in nature," Adorno claims that "meaningful political statements are to be found more in the autonomous works of art and literature that present themselves as politically dead (i.e., Kafka, Beckett, and Paul Klee) than in works which are more overtly political in content."[18]

Indirectly following Adorno, quite a number of theorists, including cultural critics such as Derek Attridge, Edward Said, and Raymond Williams concede that "it is through the formal that the political gets engaged" and agree that the task of the literary critic is to analyze "those qualities that give to literature as a field of study, parallel to but distinct from cultural studies, its special nature and justification."[19]

Such a task is definitely not simple, since the *formal* argument often invoked in aesthetic judgments has rarely managed to sound like anything else but an escapist strategy to the challenge coming from Ideology Critique. When the answer to the pressing questions about the instrumentality of art is that "Only by sustaining its function of not being socially formative can art enact a form of resistance to the rationality assumptions governing practice and be a place holder for what socially formative practice would be like," the result is a double-edged sword.[20]

On the one hand, the literary discourse gets the satisfaction of having its autonomy and specific means of interacting with the other spheres of human activity acknowledged, on the other hand, the same autonomy excludes it from an immediate and practically effective means to affect social change. As a "principle of the secondary,"[21] a mediating instance between more influential discourses, art has both the advantage and the disadvan-

tage of being at a distance from the table where the consequential social and political decisions are made.

Moreover, there have been enough moments in history when art's autonomy was perverted and its discourse successfully instrumentalized. In their light, it has become increasingly difficult to defend the subversive and critical potential of art, and vouch for its ethical, socially formative potentialities based solely on the formal qualities of its discourse. The task is even more daunting when applied to texts produced under communism.

With so many talented writers joining the ranks of the ideologues, with many more unwillingly acquiescing to cooperate in order to be able to publish at all, the literature that defended and practiced freedom of expression had to be published almost exclusively outside the official circuits controlled by the communist authorities. Yet, can anyone claim today that only such texts should be taken into consideration? What about the texts published within the official circuit that managed to escape mutilation and, as certain critics maintain, still have aesthetic value? Also, to what extent can one vouch that texts once crowned by a dissident aura still *resist* as valuable works today?

To answer this question, Adorno's suggestions regarding the investigation of the *cracks* in art forms can be usefully supplemented with Roland Barthes's distinction between the texts "lisibles" (readerly) and "scriptibles" (writerly) and with Deleuze's theories of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

According to Barthes, texts can be divided into "lisibles," (readerly) texts that are a pleasant and instructive to read but do not foster imagination to the point where the reader feels compelled to continue to write or rewrite them. By contrast, the texts "scriptibles" (writerly) inspire the reader to produce a text of his or her own. As the latter are responsible for the perpetuation of the creative force of a community, Barthes considers these texts as worthier to be part of a canon at the expense of the purely "readerly" ones.

Following a similarly dissociating logic, Deleuze maintains that each valuable text effects a deterritorialization of the known and habitual world and a corresponding reterritorialization. Consequently, the value of any given text consists in the relevance of this reterritorialization, which could be "measured" by the rhizomatic connections it manages to establish with "the world." In the case of works belonging to different historical epochs, their relevance would derive from the type and quantity of the (rhizomatic) connections they manage to establish.

In order to determine the validity and relevance of 1947 to 1990 East Central European literature for today's readers, and thus to establish a postcommunist literary canon, the critic could chose to operate with noncontroversial categories such as these outlined by Adorno, Barthes, and Deleuze. Yet, when faced with the task, most contemporary critics chose not

to. Instead they preferred to engage the aesthetic theory which constituted the foundation for pre-1989 assessment of literary value: the autonomy of the aesthetic with its corollary, resistance through the aesthetic. Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica was among its main proponents and theoreticians.

## 5

In order to approach the task of designing a postcommunist canon in East Central Europe, one has to note that the conditions of reception have changed dramatically since 1989. The expectations of the public and critics have also taken a radical turn: a need for an explicit and shocking expressivity has taken the place of the hitherto praised metaphorical and allegorical literature; what seemed heroic and daring two decades ago, seems barely experimental now.

Based on the premise that the content of 1947 to 1989 literature was either not politically courageous and relevant enough (as in the case of most Romanian texts whose authors resisted through the aesthetic) or that their relevance has now decreased given that the crisis that prompted it was solved—many young critics read the texts written between 1947 and 1989 almost exclusively in terms of their aesthetic relevance. What this amounts to is many times the condemnation of certain tropes and literary devices such as metaphors, allegories, symbols, and many others as instruments of falsehood. Certain "indirect," metaphoric styles, which defined the profile of the communist epoch and granted the sometimes well-deserved glory to many writers under communism, are indiscriminately charged with obsoleteness and irrelevance.

The reaction is encouraged by the fact that in many critical analyses, the bulk of the 1947 to 1989 literature is decontextualized and blamed for the lack of political action of both its authors and the reading public. Many younger critics, in particular, apply an excessive *test of truth* asking that the artistic truth equate open acts of civic heroism. Such harsh value judgments make it appear as if a new Iron Curtain of limited understanding had fallen over the communist epoch separating it from us and our present and leaving only literary historians and cultural analysts to unearth the recent past.

This current loss of status of pre-1989 literature has to be related to the parallel loss of prestige affecting humanist intellectuals from the 1990s on. The case of Václav Havel, the charismatic and very popular leader who had to concede ideological victory in Czechia's elections to the more pragmatic and economically oriented Václav Klaus is relevant.[22] Instead of following Havel's line centered on the need for moral self-analysis and renewal of the

Czech society according to the standard of truth, Czech people preferred Klaus's discourse of swift reconciliation and economic pragmatism.

Also, with respect to literature, something fundamental seems to have changed in the expectations of the public, whose interest veered dramatically toward writings with historical and documentary value, as was the case in Romania. Writers who have resisted through the aesthetic and even dissident ones, who had become public and political figures after 1989 were similarly replaced in the hierarchy of public interest by authors of political prison accounts and historical memoirs. This preference of the public for authentic facts and stories was the most serious blow to the 1947 to 1989 literature rooted in allegory and metaphor.

## 6

To properly discuss the specificity of aesthetic resistance against a totalitarian brainwash, we need to return to Habermas's understanding of the social function of literature as a semi-autonomous realm, which opens the space to question and challenge the "first-order" formulations of epistemology and ethics that hold sway in the world. In its capacity of "secondary" discourse which acknowledges its distance from the "real" world, art holds a significant and unique political and philosophical potential within the project of modernity.

To ask of art to fulfill an immediate political function of resistance is to contradict its very specificity and also to assess culture according to standards different from the aesthetically specific ones. To discuss art in any other terms but aesthetic amounts also to denying its right to function as an autonomous discourse which interacts with all the others in its specific ways.

The skepticism hidden behind the question of the possibility of resisting through the aesthetic is the skepticism of any exclusively scientific and moral judgment that cannot allow the truth or the ethical to manifest in any other ways but in those circumscribed by the limits of the ethical, philosophical, and scientific fields.

Yet, literature during communism proved to overstep traditional borders between discourses and to fulfill some of the functions assigned to ethical discourses, thus opening a space for moral questioning and even an ethical debate through specifically aesthetic forms. Without claiming to be a substitute for ethics, certain literary texts which maintained the tension between the general/historical/political and artistic truth during communism, became the locus of moral debate and also an implicit means for opposing official indoctrination.

At the same time such texts did not turn into explicit instruments of pro-freedom, pro-independence, pro-democratic propaganda. Many of them pleaded for freedom of speech and expression by simply perpetuating non-socialist-realist styles of writing and by offering an alternative to the official language. In those cases "it [wa]s through the formal that the political g[ot] engaged"[23] and, today it is precisely this formal element that could be openly reassessed from an aesthetic, postcolonial, and culturally critical perspective. Such analyses would also have to take into consideration the refusal of certain texts to be socially formative in the direction demanded by the official propaganda, even when their message was not clearly one of anticommunist critique. Today, it is the form of such texts, whose surface displays *cracks* and *scars* that might allow us to discuss not only their socio-political relevance, but also their relevance as literary, rewritable works.

At the same time, one must keep in mind that "In Ceauşescu's Romania, literature functioned as much more than pure literature."[24] When "historiography, sociology, and political philosophy were denied their revisionist function and were not allowed to question the state's master narratives," due to their general annihilation by state rules, literature started to perform this role alone.[25]

This point is also proven by other types of texts, non-literary in content, but abiding by the same kinds of formal standards. One example is *The Paltiniş Diary*, a collection of inspiring philosophical and cultural discussions between two Romanian philosophers: Constantin Noica[26] and his disciple, Gabriel Liiceanu.[27] This rather difficult text, containing references to and pointed discussions about major philosophers from the Western tradition enjoyed enormous popularity and provided entire generations with a modus vivendi. Its reception illustrates the transfer of critical power from political speech to traditionally marginal forms of cultural discourse such as a philosophical diary.

> In a world in which material and moral squalor were almost total, in which the isolation of Romania had begun (and there was increasing talk of "Albanianization"), in which the daily television schedule lasted two hours, one of which was devoted to the president's family, in which the press, the theatre and the cinema were subject to the most terrible censorship, in which the sense of life had been lost, the *Diary* at once opened a window.[28]

Yet, the generalization of this mode of reception to most modernist literary works at the end of the 1980s, when life's daily misery and Ceauşescu's ideological paranoia reached unimaginable heights, poses some serious theoretical and ethical questions today.

While there is no doubt that Liiceanu's book had nothing to do with the double-standard of many literary texts that played both sides simultane-

ously, its focus on high culture and advocacy for a total devotion to "cultural exercise" alone, at the expense of any civic engagement, is problematic. The idea that culture can exist by itself and that the philosopher/writer should live in an "ivory tower" is considered by many almost as dangerous as signing an actual pact of nonaggression with the officials. Since such conception alleges the transmundane existence and value of culture and advocates for absolute, metaphysical values, under conditions of totalitarianism, this position borders at best on naiveté and at worst on cynicism.

For many recent commentators, Liiceanu's inspirer, the philosopher Constantin Noica, is seen as the initiator, but also the victim of the smart game many Romanian writers thought they could play with the communist regime: that of escaping the "captive mentality" syndrome by *resisting through culture*. This spiritual endeavor was based on the premise shared by many victims of Stalinist prisons and persecutions (Noica included) that communism could not be defeated, that it would last forever and that each of us should look for individual means of salvation. As many scholars of the Romanian phenomenon note, this belief was based on the draconian brand of Stalinism Gheorghe Gheorgiu-Dej, the secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, enforced in Romania until his death in 1964. Also the lack of reformists at the top party levels and the constant persecutions and purges that followed any declaration of sympathy with the 1956, 1968, and 1977 movements of liberalization from other Central European countries played important parts in legitimizing this point of view. Liiceanu's worship of culture, following Noica's teachings, should be read keeping in mind this context, which might explain why the latter did not become a second Patočka. For example, Liiceanu writes:

> In [that] closed world, in which the mind above all is under threat, culture becomes a means of transgression, and so, by this very fact, takes on a political significance. It is not only an alternative view of the world, but also a barely perceptible resistance to total isolation, rupture, discontinuity and absorption in the mass. It is the memory of destroyed values, and the possibility of their future reconstruction. *When all means of participation in the destiny of the community are suppressed, culture remains a way of continuing to participate from the shadows and of preparing for a regeneration. It is thus in the highest degree subversive*.[29]

No doubt, this is not a blueprint for a strategy of resistance; it is rather a strategy of survival during hard times, and a way for "participating in the destiny of the community from the shadows."[30] Though, infinitely less heroic than the dissident texts published in *samizdat*, those texts written and published, or even just read with the desire to oppose the tide of brainwashing, still share a trace of genuine resistance.

However, in the long run the undesired result of this strategy was the total aesthetization of existence, the transformation of the aesthetic into an

existential option, and the replacement of all the other values guiding our lives with a *pan-aestheticism*. As Mircea Martin points out:

> As other fields and values lost the possibility to act, the aesthetic became more global and comprehensive. A kind of aesthetic hegemony, an implicit pan-aestheticism was tacitly installed over culture as a whole. The aesthetic perspective became supra-ordinary in the sense that it imposed its criteria without facing any resistance while also annexing the intellectual debate as a whole (mostly with regard to philosophy, sociology, and ethics). Nowhere else did the wide modernist definition of the aesthetic as anthropologic find a better and more pregnant illustration than in communist Romania during the 70s and 80s. Anyway, nowhere in the communist Eastern Europe had such a generalized propensity towards the aesthetic manifested itself.[31]

Granted that the phenomenon is extremely interesting, the ensuing departure from the commonly accepted norm of free, democratic values is at least dangerous. The ultimate result is the relatively uneventful cohabitation between the totalitarian system and those who were expected to profess maximum critical thinking and be among the fiercest critics of oppression: the writers. In terms of the traditional meaning aesthetics held for the German Romantics, this exacerbation of its social role and consequent takeover of entire civic domains by the aesthetic, is a maximal deviation. Far from accomplishing the supposed mediation and harmonizing of all spheres of existence, such an exacerbated aesthetic ideology resembles *general aestheticism*, which by substituting the standards of art for those of life under totalitarian circumstances, promotes evasion at best, if not outright cynicism. When nothing is more important than the work of art and every other value is subsumed under it, what follows is "the aestheticization of existence itself."[32]

In the writers' case this phenomenon amounted to "the understanding of writing as existence and even to their substitution, to living life according to a literary pattern, which meant, in fact, living in an alternative world"[33] where "the fantastic invention, oneiric divagation, formal artifices, the absurd, the livresque," and the leap into ideal worlds were strategies of instinctively or programmatically building an alternative (poetic) space, separated from the outside world of politics and political intrusions.

The uplifting belief of those writers, who applied this poetics as their philosophy of life, was that the literary product would redeem its author's lack of civic action through its revolutionary impact on the public, which would implicitly and surreptitiously be instilled with "the real values." The hope that via its aesthetic qualities the work could exonerate the writer's silence on everyday pressing civic and political matters explains why "nowhere in Eastern Europe and for sure never before in Romania did writers believe so strongly in *art as compensation for destiny*."[34] This brings us back to the

question of the relationship East Central Europeans had with the utopia of autonomous culture during communism and, implicitly to Constantin Noica, its foremost proponent.

## 6

Constantin Noica understood the *resistance through culture* as a retreat into the utopian island of Culture, which he considered, an alternative destiny. According to most of Noica's disciples and commentators, among whom I would mention Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Cornea who wrote books attempting to legitimize the philosophical project of Noica's Paltinis School,[35] the professor was looking for exceptionally endowed philosophy scholars to train, in order to facilitate their encounter of universal cultural forms. Part of *a formative and educational*, *paideic* model of culture, this training was supposed to help them rid themselves of their "petty biographical selves" in order to cultivate their "enlarged selves," which could encounter the universal forms.

To reach this "ideal shape," the professor and his disciples engaged in intellectual, physical, and *depersonalizing* exercises supposed to "mold the matter of their individuality into the *living* form of 'the enlarged ego'" allowing them to "interact with one another not only as mere individuals, but as *cultural forms*." As such, their dialogues allegedly took place not only in Noica's humble mountain cabin, "but in the spiritual *topos* of Platonic Forms."[36]

Culture itself was conceived as a universal concept, a "spiritual territory where the individual values could meet and befriend the idiomatic aspect of a nation and the universal human values; a topos situated 'above,' 'in the margin of,' and against the political," and outside immediate history.[37] The Paltinis School itself was an "actualization of Culture: this is a School that does not teach specific notions, like in the any current institutional system, but where students internalize a type of *cultural training* in order to get in shape."[38]

While being an alternative space of free dialogue, the school also provided for its members a particular mode of participating into what Gabriel Liiceanu called "the true and essential History of mankind," the History of Culture. To the accusation of empty utopianism of the school, which allegedly lacked connection to "authentic reality,"[39] Liiceanu and Noica answer that participating to culture was in itself an utterly authentic mode of participating to history, even more so than participating in everyday unfolding of historical events. Moreover, they claimed that despite its limitations, the utopia of culture enabled individuals to live a spiritually rewarding life, which put them in contact with the ideas of some of the greatest minds.

In a Platonic reversal of priorities, Noica and his disciples posited that the world of universal forms and concepts is more important to one's existence than the "real" world of everyday struggles. This attitude, says Cornea was partly justified by their conviction, at the time, that communism was to last forever, and that the only possible way to oppose it, was by cultivating an alternative, utopian reality.

Hoping to come with "[his] penny, with [his] idea, and to embrace everything that embraces [him]: nature, community, language, and culture itself,"[40] Noica demanded of his disciples a life of austerity, founded on the verb "to be," not "to have," intense study, (self)discipline, and repression of vanity, ambitions, and sensuous appetites. Despite the fact that many reproached Noica the apparent disengagement from the social and the political dimensions of life, and thus the abandon of his ethic irresponsibility, the argument can be made that for its members, his school also provided an ideal space for free, formative dialogue, a rare form of Socratic dialogue in a (communist) society in which "the free discussion, rational argumentation, civilized contradiction, the appreciation for the opposite point of view, were systematically annihilated."[41]

Though not widely known to the large public before the publication of Liiceanu's *Paltinis Diary* (1977), Noica's ideas were shared by many young intellectuals of the 1960s, who internalized them as the necessary philosophical support for their aestheticizing view and practice of literature.

To understand the *ideology* of resistance through culture, if such a term could be considered adequate, today's critics should necessarily return to Noica's doctrine and ideas and to his role as cultural trainer and philosophical authority. As one of the few representatives of the so-called golden generation of the 1930s,[42] who continued to live and write in Romania, Noica had a share of symbolic authority which exceeded greatly his actual influence on the cultivated youth. This might be one reason why his utopian theories enjoyed such a high circulation and value.

The second reason, maybe more relevant in a symbolic economy of assessment, was that, in contrast to other utopian thinkers who only imagined their utopias, Noica chose to live in his own, though the total commitment to the world of Culture was not an easy one at that time. This existential choice makes Andrei Cornea consider Noica's Cultural utopia an *atopia*, a topos whose authenticity and validity is proved by the very fact that its author passes the "self-inclusion test." The logic of this criterion of assessment stems from the impossibility of unbiasedly deciding whether a utopian system passes the test of reality or not. The only means of making such a decision, says Cornea, is then to judge the possibility of realization of a social project by the honesty of its author, by his or her desire to live in the "better world" he or she created. In view of Noica's biography and especially of his Patinis School project, Noica, undoubtedly passed this test.

While his model of resisting through culture might have had its downfalls and shortcomings, Noica's allegiance to it proves his honest belief that there were things worth saving in communist Romania and that he assumed the task of *saving what was still to be saved*.

Between the choice of aestheticization of existence and that of living in an utopian, alternative world, the aesthetic resistance of Eastern European writers became over time and in particular countries, a veritable modus vivendi. However, today, it is more obvious than ever that the outcome of living according to such an aesth*ethic* model, which was necessarily less politically efficient was also a symptom of a less than heroic mentality. Based as it were on a post-Fall ethic, elaborated after Eastern Europe accepted the coexistence with the communist devil, the aesthetic model of resistance through culture was, indeed trying, as Noica and others claimed, to save what was still to be saved. The question remains: was that good enough?

## NOTES

1. In Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Filozofie si nationalism: Paradoxul Noica* [Philosophy and Nationalism: Noica's Paradox] (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1998).
2. Caius Dobrescu, "Politicile arogantei" [The Politics of Arrogance], in *Inamicul impersonal* [Impersonal Enemy], Seria Studii culturale (Piteşti: Editura Paralela 45, 2001), 155. Cristian Moraru, "'Modelul Cartarescu' versus 'modelul Patapievici,'" in *Observator cultural* (2003), 177.
3. Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), vii.
4. Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus*, 19.
5. Václav Havel, "Six Asides about Culture," in *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 133.
6. Havel, "Six Asides about Culture," 133.
7. Mircea Martin, "Estetismul socialist," *Romania literara*, June 7–9, 11, 2004, p. 18.
8. Monica Lovinescu, *Est-etice* (Bucuresti: Humanitas Publishing House, 1994), 28.
9. Paul Cernat in "Dincolo de canonul estetic," *Observatorul cultural*, July 3–5, 2002, p. 24.
10. Gabriel Liiceanu, *Paltinis Diary: A Paideic Model in Humanist Culture* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000), xxvi.
11. Ana Blandiana, "Rezistenta prin cultura," *Romania literara*, September 17, 2003, p. 6.
12. Blandiana, "Rezistenta prin cultura," 5.
13. Adam Zagajewski, "Intellectuals as Leaders," *Partisan Review* 4 (Fall 1992): 669–76.
14. Milan Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," in *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945*, ed. Gale Stokes. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 217–24.

15. Martin, "Estetismul socialist," 16.

16. Miklos Haraszti, *Worker in a Worker's State*, in *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism*, trans. Katalin Landesmann, Steven Landesmann, and Steve Waserman (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987), 83.

17. Cernat in "Dincolo de canonul estetic," 25.

18. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretl Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. and new edition by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 109.

19. George Levine, *Aesthetic Ideology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 23–24.

20. Charles Bernstein, "What's Art Got to Do with It? The Status of the Subject of the Humanities in the Age of Cultural Studies," in *Beauty and the Critic: Aesthetics in the Age of Cultural Studies*, ed. James Soderholm (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 24.

21. See Virgil Nemoianu, *A Theory of the Secondary: Literature, Progress, and Reaction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989).

22. In "Romanian Political Intellectuals before and after the Revolution," published in Andras Bozoki's *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi notes: "It is undeniable that what authors such as Timothy Garton-Ash saw as 'revolutions of the intellectuals'—the 1989 revolutions—did not usher in the rule of the intellectual class, except for brief periods at the very beginning. Václav Havel may well be the last famous intellectual dissident holding high office, and even he was eventually sidelined by Prime Minister Václav Klaus: Theodore Draper and others have attempted to contrast the values of the two men in order to prove that while Klaus represents the future, Havel is a figure of the past. In any case, the much-vaunted success of the Czech Republic was unanimously attributed to Klaus, a strong supporter of decommunization legislation and radical market reform, rather than to Havel, who opposed the policy of lustration and advocated a more moderate approach to market economy" (74).

23. Adorno, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 76.

24. Martin, "Estetismul socialist," 13.

25. Marcel Cornis-Pope, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 133–35.

26. Constantin Noica (1909–1987) was a Romanian philosopher and a member of the "Kriterion Group" along with E. M. Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Mihail Sebastian, and others. He was a friend of Eugene Ionesco's and of right-wing sympathies during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1958, ten years after the communist occupation of the country, Noica is arrested along with other Romanian intellectuals and sentenced to twenty-five years of prison for hostile discussions and for undermining the "socialist power." The actual transgression consisted of reading out loud from his text *Tales about Hegel*, whose French translation is sent to E. M. Cioran in Paris and of continuing the correspondence with Cioran. In 1964 Noica was released from prison and, until his retirement in 1975, worked for the Center of Logics coordinated by the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania. In 1975 he founded the Păltiniş Group—a group of dialogue and philosophical training for young and gifted intellectuals, which met once a month in his tiny room in Păltinis, a remote mountain

resort. Gabriel Liiceanu, Andrei Pleşu, and Victor Ieronim Stoichiţă are among the best-known members of the group, which consisted in some dozens of disciples and hundreds of admirers.

27. Gabriel Liiceanu (born 1942) is a renowned Romanian philosopher and translator. He graduated in 1965 from the University of Bucharest with a degree in philosophy and in 1973 with a degree in classic languages, also from the University of Bucharest. During 1982, he studied in Germany as a Humboldt grantee. He was one of the most active members of the "Paltinis Group." From 1990, Liiceanu was the director of Humanitas Publishing House (one of the best Romanian publishing houses) and an active presence in the civic life.

28. Noica, *Paltinis Diary*, xxx.

29. Noica, *Paltinis Diary*, xxvi.

30. Noica, *Paltinis Diary*, xxi.

31. Martin, "Estetismul socialist," 4.

32. Martin, "Estetismul socialist," 5.

33. Martin, "Estetismul socialist," 5.

34. Martin, "Estetismul socialist," 6.

35. Liiceanu is the author of the *Paltinis Diary* and *The Epistolary*, which describe the philosophy and intellectual rituals of the Paltinis School. Andrei Cornea's recent *From Athens School to the Paltinis School; or about Utopias, Realities and the (Lack of) Difference between Them* discusses Noica's cultural utopia in the context of other famous utopias such as Plato's versus Aristotle's, Thomas Morus's versus Machiavelli's, Charles Fourier's versus Marx's.

36. Andrei Cornea, *De la Scoala din Atena la Scoala de la Paltinis sau despre utopii, raelitati si despre (lipsa) de diferenta dintre ele* [From Athens School to Paltinis School or about Utopias, Realities and the (Lack of) Difference between Them] (Bucuresti: Humanitas Publishing House, 2004), 250.

37. Cornea, *De la Scoala din Atena la Scoala de la Paltinis*, 250.

38. Cornea, *De la Scoala din Atena la Scoala de la Paltinis*, 250.

39. The claim is made by Nicolae Steinhardt in his letters to Noica, published in Gabriel Liiceanu, ed., *Epistolar* (Bucuresti: Editura Cartea Romaneasca, 1987), 207.

40. Cornea, *De la Scoala din Atena la Scoala de la Paltinis*, 233.

41. Cornea, *De la Scoala din Atena la Scoala de la Paltinis*, 218.

42. The most prominent members of the so-called golden generation are Eugene Ionesco, E. M. Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcanescu, and Constantin Noica.

# 4

# Changing Perceptions of Pavel Florensky in Russian and Soviet Scholarship

*Clemena Antonova*

Among the most interesting developments in recent Russian thought is the rediscovery of the works of Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), which were almost completely forgotten for the greater part of the Communist period. It will be suggested that the dramatic and frequently controversial perceptions of Florensky's thought illustrate general trends in the development of Russian philosophy in the twentieth century. Probably more than with any other author, the fate of Florensky's heritage is intrinsically linked with the fate of Russian philosophy. This is partly so as a result of Florensky's own multifaceted interests and the huge scope of his intellectual inquiry. Ideologically laden and politicized receptions of Florensky would focus on an isolated aspect of his works and interpret it to their own purposes frequently to the exclusion of the author's overall output. In this sense, the reactions to Florensky's oeuvre represent an intriguing example of the complicated and frequently tense relationship between knowledge and power.

As the present chapter will not be concerned with Florensky's ideas as such, a short note outlining the author's intellectual biography has been considered sufficient (section I). Our task will be to trace the development in the perception of Florensky in Russian and Soviet scholarship. For reasons of clarity, I have outlined three more or less distinct stages of this development. Even though I do not exclude the possibility of some continuity and overflow from one period to another I still believe that there is a dominant trend that legitimizes such a division.

Section II of this chapter is concerned with the years before and immediately after the October Revolution (1917), which saw Florensky mainly as a religious philosopher and one of the most important representatives of the so-called Russian Religious Renaissance[1] at the beginning of the twentieth

century. This view was especially promoted by the Russian émigré intellectuals, most of whom were exiled from Russia in 1922. Section III discusses the suppression of this dimension of Florensky's work by the Bolsheviks in favor of a view which promoted Florensky as a scientist. After several decades of almost complete neglect during the Stalinist era, Florensky became known to Russian scholars in the 1960s as a thinker with interesting, frequently unorthodox ideas in more politically neutral fields as semiotics, art history and cultural studies. In section III a return of interest in the religious dimensions of Florensky's thought can be noticed in the period immediately after perestroika. Florensky's works again find their place in the context of a revived interest in Orthodoxy.

It seems that so far Florensky's works have been studied selectively and in view of reigning ideologies, largely following the ebb and flow of movements of Orthodox religious revival, neither of which probably fully deserves the term "religious Renaissance." Some insightful critiques on Florensky have been produced but these will remain limited, sometimes even distorted studies, if they do not become complementary in a project that analyses the various aspects of Florensky's thought as manifestations of his worldview. Recent philosophical scholarship has taken the first steps in this direction but there still seems to be a long way to go.

## INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY: A NOTE

What probably is the most immediately noticeable feature of Florensky's intellectual biography is the huge scope of his studies, which allies him with almost all the major trends of the Russian Silver Age. At the same time, a closer look at his development as a scholar reveals a remarkable consistency of interests, evident already in his early years at the university. From 1900 to 1904 while a student at the physics-mathematical faculty at Moscow, the young Florensky was actively attending lectures at the historical-philosophical faculty. Working and thinking at the crossroads of science and humanities became a permanent characteristic of his intellectual make-up henceforth. We will see how this was successfully exploited in the process of reception of Florensky in the twentieth century.

The budding scientist started attending the philosophy seminars of prominent Russian thinkers as Lev Lopatin and Sergei Trubetskoy. It is Trubetskoy's brother, however, Evgeny Trubetskoy, who had a direct impact on Florensky, especially with his ideas on the Russian icon, which we can easily trace in Florensky's own writing on the subject from the 1920s. Trubetskoy's essays of 1915 to 1917[2] were in the forefront of the movement of ideas growing around the rediscovery of the religious image at the turn of the twentieth century. The icon becomes prominent on two grounds—as

an element of the religious revival in Russia at the time and as an emblem of the great Russian nation. The religious and nationalistic interpretations popularized by Trubetskoy are also as prominent with Florensky.[3]

It is well-known that the icon remained a life-long interest of Florensky, as exhibited in influential works like *The Iconostasis* (1922)[4] and the essay on "Reverse Perspective" (1919).[5] Much lesser attention has received the fact that Florensky had a close personal and intellectual relationship with a number of Russian Symbolists, which also started in these early formative years. The twenty-one-year-old Florensky published his first article "O sueverii" (On Superstition) in 1903 in the Symbolist journal *Novyi put'*, edited by Dmitrii Merezkovski and Zinaida Hippius. In the same year he met Andrei Bely,[6] with whom he corresponded for a number of years.[7] However, nobody was as personally and intellectually close to Florensky as Viacheslav Ivanov,[8] the Symbolist poet and foremost Symbolist theoretician. It has been noticed that Ivanov's conception of the symbol, which informed Symbolist theory, owed a lot to German romantic philosophy and especially Schelling. Florensky's scattered writings on the symbol, which in many ways, form the core of his worldview, have very much the same background, that is, the German romantics but not without knowledge of Ivanov's work.[9] Therefore, a complex source of influences underlie Florensky's definition of the icon as symbol in the *Iconostasis.* There are the more obvious religious overtones that go back to a strand of thought in Eastern Orthodox theology—Pseudo-Dionysius, Byzantine theology of the icon, and so on—but also Russian Symbolist theory with its romantic background.[10]

When on his graduation of the physico-mathematical faculty in 1904, Florensky entered the Theological Academy in Moscow his academic interests seemed to have been largely formed. This was demonstrated in an almost dramatic way with the publication of Florensky's master's thesis from the academy under the title *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*. The first variant came out in 1908 and a revised edition in 1914. If until this moment he had been known to a relatively small group of people, with this publication Florensky decisively made his name. While, as we will see it was regarded in some circles mainly as a theological treatise, the book is much more a personal account of the author's journey toward Christianity. Very appropriately, the text is written in the form of twelve letters on topics, such as "Two Worlds," a title reminding us of Trubetskoy's essay "The Two Worlds in the Russian Icon" and more generally of the Platonic and Neoplatonic underpinnings of much of Russian philosophy, "Sophia," a conception important both for Russian religious philosophy and for the Russian Symbolists, "The Trinity," a mainstream theological dogma, and so on. While the topics sound familiar and refer to almost all the major sources of Florensky's thought, the author's treatment of them is highly unorthodox and unconventional. A mathematical problem by Lewis Carroll, the Oxford mathematician and

author of *Alice in Wonderland*, provides a helping hand in the discussion of the Trinity.[11] The paradox of the Trinity is set alongside the problem of irrationality in modern mathematics.[12] The icon of the Annunciation with its symbolic colors is discussed in the context of the Sophia concept.[13] The application of modern scientific knowledge to traditional theology while typical of Florensky is also a trend in Russian religious philosophy at least since Vladimir Soloviev in the nineteenth century.

*The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, as well as the earlier article "On Superstition" had another undercurrent, which has been hardly remarked on—ideas from theosophy and the occult sciences run through both these works. However, this becomes particularly noticeable with another book that Florensky published at the time, *The Meaning of Idealism* (available only in Russian). As the text came out in the same year as *The Pillar* it must have been largely overshadowed by the latter. There is very little mention of it at the time, while nothing explains why it is still so strongly neglected. *The Meaning of Idealism*, on the one hand, treats of topics and uses approaches already familiar from *The Pillar*, while on the other hand, it reveals in a more obvious way a dimension of Florensky's work which links him to the revival of occultism at the beginning of the century as well as to modernism and the European avant-garde.

It has been noticed that in *The Meaning of Idealism* the author "relied on esoteric sources we find in Kandinsky's library,"[14] among which was a reference to Zöllner's *Die transcendentale Physik* (1878), one of the cornerstones for occultism, which at the time was hugely popular among Symbolist poets and modernist painters. The name of yet another author in the occultist tradition, Charles Hinton, crops up in Florensky's analysis of the pictorial construction of Picasso's musical instruments of 1912 to 1913. One is tempted to find a more direct link between Kandinsky's interests in occultism and Florensky's in the context of the Russian (later State) Academy of Artistic Sciences, at which both Kandinsky and Florensky taught for a time (Kandinsky for less than a year, Florensky between 1921 and 1924).[15] In fact, there is no need for that, as the popularity of occultism at the time in Russia has been well attested and belongs to an all-European movement of ideas.[16] It is further interesting to notice that Florensky had seen Shchukin's collection of modern painting in Moscow, open to the public since 1907, and the Picasso works there in particular. What had drawn his attention was exactly Picasso's construction of space, which became typical of much of Cubist, especially early Cubist art. Florensky's analysis of the group of Picasso's paintings can be seen as part of a debate among the Russian intelligentsia at the time, excited by the new and disturbing mode of representation. Berdyaev saw that as a sign of the disintegration of modern culture, Aleksei Grishchenko interpreted Cubism, especially Russian Cubo-futurism and neoprimitivism in more positive terms by finding analogies with the

traditional principles of pictorial construction of the Russian icon.[17] Florensky's view was more balanced and it might have affected his own writings on pictorial space.

Already in his university days Florensky had considered the possibility of becoming a monk, so it came as no surprise when he took orders in 1911. At the time he was teaching philosophy at the Theology Academy. After the closure of the Academy, he took a position at the Academy of Artistic Sciences in Moscow where he worked alongside people like Berdyaev and Kandinsky. These were not only some of Florensky's most productive years but also some of the most vibrant moments in Russian intellectual history. Florensky was involved in a variety of projects, all of which exhibit his approach outlined above—theology is never divorced from philosophy and science, art is set within the context of religion and modern scientific achievement.[18] When in the second half of the 1920s Florensky was assigned to more practically oriented and scientifically focused positions, one gets the impression that for him the transition was smooth, as he had never found a conflict between science, religion and philosophy. The chief editor of *Bogoslovskii vestnik* (Theological Journal) from 1911 to 1917 became the editor of *Tekhnologicheskaia entsiklopediia* (Technological Encyclopedia) from 1927 onward, while holding at the same time a senior position at the Commission for Electrification and engaging in a number of scientific projects.

Florensky always believed that the very autonomy between knowledge and faith was illusory, as both were "equally necessary for man, equally valuable and sacred."[19] However, probably for that same reason, he never saw the need to downplay his religious association and it is possible that his arrest in 1927 and then in 1933, ending with his execution in 1937, was part of the purges of priests and religious intellectuals. There is a sense of tragic irony in the fact that he was executed at the labor camp at Solovki at the White Sea, which had been formerly a monastery that Florensky had chosen when considering the vocation of a monk.

## FATHER PAVEL: FLORENSKY AND "THE RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS RENAISSANCE" AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In a manner, Florensky made his reputation with *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, the revised version of which appeared in 1914. The book marks the strong reactions, both positive and negative, that Florensky's writings were destined to produce. The huge intellectual scope of the work was perceived by all, but so long as it was regarded mainly as a theological treatise the pertinent question was how true it was to the spirit of Orthodox Christianity.

It seems that those who regarded Florensky's work as a contribution to theology in the strict sense of the word remained uncomfortable, when not violently antagonistic. Tellingly, in *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (The Ways of Russian Theology), Father George Florovsky refers to Florensky's book and charges the author with being "a stranger to the Orthodox world."[20] Florovsky, who was himself a renowned specialist of the history of Orthodox theology, would be quick to discover any straying from the path of tradition and dogma. At the same time, Nikolai Zernov, calls the *Pillar and the Ground of Truth* "an epoch-making book,"[21] which "revolutionized religious thinking."[22] One of the foremost religious philosophers, Nikolai Lossky, movingly recounts how Florensky's book "furthered [his] gradual return to the Church."[23] But then Lossky's own understanding of religious thought was fundamentally different from Florovsky's, as when he says "Russian religious philosophy is not a repetition of scholasticism; it makes use of all the achievements of science and modern philosophy."[24]

In other words, the debate on Florensky's *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* illustrates a distinction between theology and religious philosophy which is of particular importance in Russian thought. The book becomes a prime example of Russian religious philosophy in the vein already intimated by Vladimir Soloviev in the nineteenth century. It obviously oversteps the expected framework of the theological genre with its intimate, essayistic style of writing, just as obviously as it included subjects one does not expect to encounter in a theological treatise. Most problematic is probably Florensky's very approach to these subjects. The material drawn from modern science, folklore, even magic and occultism, is put to the use of theological dogma. What a religious philosopher finds most attractive in Florensky becomes a bone of contention for a theologian. In this way, Florovsky complains that Florensky "seems to step back, beyond Christianity, into Platonism and ancient religions, or to swerve aside into realm of occultism and magic."[25] He further cites, with some degree of indignation, the kind of subjects that Florensky gave to his students for their theses—on K. Du-Prel, on Dionysus, on Russian folklore—while "he himself had intended to present as his thesis for Master of Divinity his translation of Iamblichus [a pagan Neoplatonic author of Late Antiquity] with notes."[26]

*The Pillar and Ground* was the work that Florensky was remembered for by Russian intellectuals living in Paris, Prague, Berlin, and so forth. In these circles, the view of Florensky as primarily a religious philosopher was firmly established. This is important since Florensky was very much in the background of future developments such as the "Paris theology," associated with St. Sergius Institute in Paris and later with the still active St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York. One can imagine that the way Florensky was taught at institutions in the West in the years after 1922 must have reflected the controversial reception of his early book and the relating distinction be-

tween theology and religious philosophy, which, as I have suggested, at least partly accounts for the contrasting evaluations. Nikolai Zernov, one of Florensky's admirers, was a Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Culture at Oxford University, while both Nikolai Lossky and George Florovsky, the latter severely critical of Florensky, taught at the St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

Among the Russian intellectuals exiled from Russia Sergei Bulgakov, one of the founders of the St. Sergius Institute in Paris, was probably closest to Florensky both personally and intellectually. Their relationship was famously recorded in the 1917 painting by Mikhail Nesterov, entitled *The Philosophers*. The profound influence that Florensky exercised on Bulgakov was acknowledged by Bulgakov himself and has been noticed by Bulgakov scholars. According to Catherine Evtuhov, Bulgakov was especially attracted to Florensky's idea "to overcome the opposition between ecclesiastical and worldly."[27] This idea lay at the heart of Florensky's and Bulgakov's project of founding a religious-philosophical academy after the closure by the Bolsheviks of the Theological Academy in Moscow. In all probability, "the transformed and broader programme"[28] of this unrealized project represents a shift from a theological faculty to a faculty of religious philosophy—in other words, a shift toward Florensky's own work and mental attitude. It is in this project that Bulgakov finds the intellectual source of the work done by him and his associates in Paris. Thus, the so-called Paris theology was literally inspired by Florensky and one of its main representatives Bulgakov felt that it was conducted under Florensky's "spiritual partnership."[29]

While Florensky was executed in 1937, news of his death only reached his exiled associates and friends in 1943. The reaction this time represented a united front—one of the great minds of Russia had been tragically lost. To those abroad, Florensky became a symbol of Russia, a martyr of Orthodoxy. Bulgakov's essay is a moving response to the execution of Florensky, to whom he invariably refers as "Father Pavel." "From all of my contemporaries . . . he was the greatest," Bulgakov says.[30] The image of Florensky, giving his lectures in his cassock and cross in Bolshevik Moscow stuck in the minds.[31] Florensky's tragic death was seen as the last stage of his "priestly homelessness," which had already begun in 1918.[32]

The memory of Florensky the scholar was, however, incomplete for the simple reason that only his early works, that is, prior to 1922, were known. In this sense, what Bulgakov says is characteristic of the state of knowledge on Florensky among Russian émigrés. While Bulgakov admires his "all-devouring inquisitiveness of mind,"[33] he admits to not knowing what happened to Florensky's manuscripts in various fields of scholarship.[34] It also becomes clear that Bulgakov knew of the existence of these manuscripts but had not read them, as most of them were work in progress. In the years after

1922 and before his second arrest in 1934, however, Florensky held various teaching and research positions, which allowed him to share his ideas with his colleagues and students. Some of his works from this period were published, while most were not and remained unfinished.

Far more importantly Florensky's early works were read as religious literature, while the wealth of material that Florensky drew from either produced a negative reaction, as with Florovsky, or was seen as no more than a mark of erudition and encyclopedic knowledge. At the same time, the very topics that Florensky was interested in brought him close to other intellectual traditions that existed alongside the "Religious Renaissance." It is clear, for example, that already in his early period Florensky was profoundly interested in modernist developments. At the same time, this dimension of his work was either completely neglected by the Russian intellectuals in exile or treated as incidental to his work. Florensky's admirers at the time managed to employ him in their own utopian project of the "Russian Religious Renaissance" by focusing on the religious dimension of his work and interpreting it in isolation from other, equally important aspects. As it is, the "Renaissance" never really took place. It was stifled in the Soviet Union for many years to come and limited to a handful of people living abroad, where it gradually waned, too.

## "THE RUSSIAN LEONARDO": FLORENSKY'S SOVIET PERIOD

Florensky's associates from his early period were well aware of his encyclopedic mind and the extraordinary range of his interests. An article by V. Filinsky entitled "A Russian Leonardo da Vinci in a Concentration Camp" cited an impressive list of Florensky's achievements as a philosopher, a symbolist poet, a mathematician and physicist, a polyglot, and so on. Filinsky expresses the reaction of his contemporaries when he says: "A new Leonardo da Vinci was standing before us and we all were aware of it."[35] It is, however, in the Soviet period that Florensky's achievements outside the field of religious thought became known—first, in hard science and later in the humanities. In this way, Florensky scholarship was enriched while, by neglecting the underlying dimension of religious philosophy, it was once again manipulated and even distorted.

An intriguing question that can be asked is how it happened that Florensky was not included in the list of names drawn by Lenin and Trotsky by which over a hundred Russian intellectuals, who were considered as representatives of bourgeois culture, were exiled from the newly formed Soviet Union in 1922.[36] Without a great deal of exaggeration, it could be said that all significant Russian philosophers, but Florensky and Aleksei Losev, were driven out of the country. Most of those exiled had one "dangerous" quality

in common—they were considered religious thinkers. But so was Florensky, besides he was among the most influential ones. Ironically, some on the "philosophy ship"[37] must have found their place there, at least partly, as a result of the impact of Florensky's *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*.

One of the possible answers to this paradox could be that in the early years after the Revolution the Soviets preferred to regard Florensky, who was originally trained as a physicist and mathematician, as a scientist rather than as a religious philosopher. Science, indeed, represented a genuine part of Florensky's academic oeuvre and in this field his contributions were as significant, and frequently, as original as in religious philosophy. He got actively involved in Lenin's project for the electrification of the Soviet Union by holding important administrative positions as well as conducting research on electric fields. In 1920 he collaborated with the biologist Ivan Ognev in the development of an ultramicroscope at the Istological Institute in Moscow. In 1927 Florensky invented a noncoagulating machine oil, which the Bolsheviks called "*dekanit*" in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. The list of his scientific research could be further extended but the important point is that biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics remained life-long interests for Florensky. A story circulated after his death that while in the Solovki camp he was conducting chemical analyses of seaweed and lecturing on them to the other political prisoners.

From the middle of the 1920s on, as is well known, the Stalinist regime became increasingly intolerant and paranoid. It was no longer possible, for example, to have open debates that had been a common feature of intellectual life in the first years after the Revolution, as the one of Lunacharsky, a Bolshevik intellectual and the religiously inclined Symbolist poet Viacheslav Ivanov on the existence of God. For the next several decades after Florensky's execution in 1937, there was practically complete silence about his work. No one in Russia dared show excessive interest in a politically discredited figure, while the connections with the West where people like Bulgakov and Lossky kept Florensky's memory alive were almost nonexistent.[38]

It was only in the late 1960s that Florensky's work was rediscovered in the context of an overall redirection of Russian philosophy and culture. Already a decade earlier some works by the Russian émigrés had become available, even though invariably in a limited edition. In 1954 a Russian translation of Lossky's *History of Russian Philosophy* came out, while two years later Zenkovsky's book of the same title was published. To the fortunate few who got hold of the small number of copies Florensky's name became known. More importantly, these were the first signs of what Stanislav Dzhimbinov has called "the return of Russian philosophy,"[39] a development to which Florensky scholarship was inextricably linked.

Marxist philosophy in Russia during the Stalinist period failed to produce almost anything of originality and abiding value. In the 1960s the stalemate

that had been reached became painfully obvious to intellectuals and the return to Russian thinkers from the beginning of the century produced a breath of fresh air, as well as an impetus for contemporary Soviet philosophers. This trend is well illustrated by the articles of *Filosofskaia entsiklopediia* (The Philosophical Encyclopedia), a prestigious publication that started in 1960 and continued for ten years. In the fourth volume of 1967 a series of articles by Sergei Averintsev treated of various topics relating to Orthodoxy, something which would have been unthinkable in an official publication some years earlier. In 1970, the fifth and last volume produced "a real sensation."[40] Averintsev contributed twenty-seven articles, devoted to religious philosophers as Sovoliev and Florensky. At this stage, it could be said that Florensky became more widely known for the first time in years.

At the same time, there is some irony in the fact that the works by Florensky himself that were published at the time seem to have been read outside the context of religious philosophy and Orthodox thought. Rather, Florensky became known for his original contributions to disciplines that were considered avant-garde in 1960s, such as semiotics and cultural studies. The main driving force behind this development was the important journal *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* (Researches on Sign Systems), associated with the Moscow-Tartu School of Semiotics, founded by Yuri Lotman (1922–1993).[41] The journal started publishing some of Florensky's texts that were read through the lens of the project of the school, which was the development of a unified semiotic theory of culture. These texts were usually preceded by a short introduction. It is noticeable that in all these publications the interest was shifted away from the more obviously religious subjects and onto more politically neutral fields. This is how a completely different aspect of Florensky's work began to attract a more systematic attention.

Among the greatest contributions to scholarship was the publication for the first time in 1967 of Florensky's essay "Reverse Perspective" (written in 1919),[42] dealing with the construction of space in the medieval icon. Up to the present, this remains the classic text on the subject, which is in the background of almost all studies on iconic space. These studies are mainly by Soviet scholars, all of whom have been directly indebted to Florensky's text.[43] The most interesting, perhaps, is Lev Zhegin's *Iazyik zhivopisnogo proizvedeniia* (The Language of the Work of Art, 1970), which was partly concerned with providing visual analyses to Florensky's theoretical positions.[44] The book is the result of forty years of work, which started under the inspiration of Florensky, whom Zhegin personally knew and with whom he moved in the same intellectual circles in the 1920s.

The importance of this short text lies, among other things, in making clear that Florensky had shared ideas and concerns that were part and parcel of the European avant-garde, namely the "distortion" of pictorial space, mul-

tiple viewpoints implied in the construction of figures, synthetic vision that counteracts Renaissance visuality, and so forth. This aspect of Florensky's work had received little attention in previous scholarship, which, as was mentioned, had seen Florensky mainly in the light of his religious-philosophical or scientific writings. Once the text of "Reverse Perspective" became known, it was clear that Florensky was not only part of the "Religious Renaissance" but had to be reconsidered in the context of early twentieth-century modernism. Zhegin, himself close to various avant-garde artists like Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov, was quick to sense this point and it comes across in his memoir of Florensky.[45] The figure of Florensky in his usual white cassock leaning over and inspecting a modernist painting that Zhegin had brought to him remains memorable. We hear of Florensky attending artists' meetings and participating in their heated discussions. He was a regular visitor, for instance, at the meetings that took place at Lyubov Popova's (a Russian Cubist painter) home where he would have met people like Tatlin, one of the foremost avant-garde artists. Florensky was also actively involved with the modern artists of the Makovetz group, who had asked him to contribute an article to the first issue of their journal.

It appears that in Soviet Russia in the years before perestroika, there were two more or less distinct traditions of the perception of Florensky's work, following several decades of neglect. The Bolsheviks after the Revolution saw Florensky predominantly as a scientist, who had contributed some useful innovations in the advancement of Soviet science. The scientist-priest must have presented an annoying paradox to some of the Bolshevik leaders, but Florensky's religious affiliation became a problem only at the end of the 1920s and must have been a reason that led to his execution in one of the *chistki* of 1937. In the more relaxed climate of the Khrushchev era, Florensky was once more rediscovered by being associated with Russian religious philosophers at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the same time, little was known about Florensky's actual works in the field of religious philosophy as attention was shifted to his contribution to the upcoming discipline of semiotics and cultural studies, as well as to art history.

Neither of these two views of Florensky—as a scientist or as a semiotician/cultural and art historian—could do full justice to Florensky's ideas. His scientific interests were never kept in isolation from the rest of his work. As was mentioned, he actually saw no conflict between them and his religious studies. Not only had Florensky overcome the conflict between reason and faith, but all the rest of his research in the field of art and culture was made for the sake of a worldview that put reason in the service of faith. In this he was keeping to the spirit of the founders of Russian religious philosophy, to whom the concept of integral reason was dear and of profound importance. For Soloviev, for example, "fallen" human nature meant, above all, the disintegration of the organic unity of being into various faculties.[46] In the same

way, for Florensky the aim of science was go beyond concrete phenomena and uncover ultimate reality. Thus, science shares the same fundamental concern with all the rest of human knowledge—religion, philosophy, and art. Therefore, early Soviet reception of Florensky as a scientist exclusively shows another limitation and distortion imposed by "power" on "knowledge." Florensky scholarship in the 1960s, too, was limiting so far as it had downplayed the religious overtones, underlying all of Florensky's works.

## FLORENSKY AND THE NEW "RELIGIOUS RENAISSANCE" AFTER PERESTROIKA

It would be misleading to put too much stress on a division in terms of ideas that is marked by perestroika. As was mentioned in the previous section, the rediscovery of Florensky's work had already started in the 1960s. Many of the ideas in Florensky studies that came out after the fall of Communism were already voiced or at least prepared by research done in the 1960s and 1970s. In this sense, the development of Florensky scholarship becomes representative of a major trend in the development of Russian philosophy. There seems to be a great deal of truth in Dzhimbinov's contention that "the return of Russian philosophy" would have been "inevitable, even if there had not been a *perestroika*."[47] As Dzhimbinov says, "something was irreversibly set into motion at the end of the 70s."[48]

At the same time, glasnost did make a difference. Books by pre-Soviet religious thinkers were no longer published in a limited edition[49] or/and distributed in rural areas rather than the big cities.[50] The obvious result was that they reached a much wider audience. Further, they were no longer censored. Already in the summer of 1988 *Pravda*, the Communist Party newspaper, announced a decision of the Politburo that a series of books on the history of Russian philosophical thought be published as an appendix to the journal *Voprosy filosofii* (Problems of Philosophy). Any comprehensive history of Russian philosophy, however, would be impossible without religious philosophy, which formed the main bulk of Russian pre-Soviet thought. This is how writings by Florensky and Berdyaev entered once again the official press. The next years and up to the present have seen an explosion of publications by and on Florensky and other religious philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this section of my paper I will not be concerned with providing an account of the various critical studies on Florensky but with outlining major trends of the reception of his work.

The predominant reaction has been to place Florensky once again in the context of the "Religious Renaissance" in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. In a manner, this represents a full circle back to the reception of Florensky by most of his contemporaries, which was discussed

in the first section of this chapter. What makes such an approach especially attractive is that it squares with ideas about a new religious awakening in Russia after the changes. Parallels are drawn between the state of ideas at the end of the nineteenth and the end of the twentieth centuries. As one author says, "almost ninety years ago *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* helped conversion" and "the same happens now."[51] While there has definitely been a revival of interest in Orthodox thought the religious revival in Russia, however, can hardly justify any expectation of a whole-sale "conversion" in any sense of the word. The "Religious Renaissance" has remained utopian at the end of the twentieth century, as much as it was a hundred years earlier.

At the same time, the very idea of Christianity and its mission in the modern world has changed. It is in the context of this reinterpretation of Christianity that Florensky become so important. If we understand the contemporary Christian mission as "the expression of all of man's creative potential"[52] and ultimately as aiming at "building a Christian culture,"[53] it is clear why once again Florensky has become relevant and why religious philosophy rather than theology becomes the language of Orthodox thought. Because Florensky, probably more than anyone else, managed to express in a modern philosophical idiom existential concerns at the heart of Orthodox thought. This is important if Russian religious philosophy is burdened with the task of filling the cultural and spiritual vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet system and its ideology. It is in this sense that Florensky can be considered a missionary and also, I believe, a mediator between Orthodox thought at the beginning of the twentieth century and orientation of thought at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is significant that in both cases—at the beginning of the twentieth century and at the beginning of this century—the state of ideas is seen as in a state of crisis.

There are two main dangers that I see in modern perceptions of Florensky. On the one hand, studies that focus exclusively on the religious dimension of his thought, without making clear the specific, all-encompassing type of religiosity that he exposes would fail to do justice to Florensky's work. On the other hand, analyzing Florensky's ideas in a certain field of knowledge—say art history, semiotics, and so on—outside the overall context of his religious (in this specific sense) worldview creates a false impression of someone who is little more than a wonderfully erudite writer. Works on Florensky that best convey the spirit of his thought are those that manage to place Florensky the art historian, the anthropologist, the scientist, and so on, within the larger framework of his worldview.

A good example for such a study is the book by the contemporary Russian scholar Viktor Bychkov *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky*.[54] The title itself is revealing. Bychkov's study is concerned mainly with those texts by Florensky which are devoted to subjects

that belong to the realm of art history and aesthetics. At the same time, the only way to understand Florensky's views is to place them within the broader context of religious belief. We cannot know Florensky's aesthetics without knowing Florensky's theology—this is one of Bychkov's main claims. One wonders, though, if "religious philosophy" would not be a better term here for the reason already mentioned. Further and more importantly, Bychkov himself problematizes the concept of, and therefore the term, "aesthetics." In the Eastern Orthodox tradition "aesthetics" has a fundamentally different connotation of that in Western thought, where the term originated. Bychkov tackles the problem of aesthetics in two earlier works—*Byzantine Aesthetics* and *Russian Medieval Aesthetics* (both available only in Russian). His book on Florensky could be read as the last of this trilogy, since Florensky is seen as the last important representative in a long line of Eastern Orthodox thought on art, which has its roots in Late Antiquity with authors like Philo of Alexandria.

One idea that comes forcibly across in Bychkov's studies is that Eastern Orthodox aesthetics is fundamentally different from Western aesthetics in that it is nonsystematic, that is, the systematic categories of Western, Kantian aesthetics are inadequate to describe it. Eastern Orthodox aesthetics is intimately and inextricably bound to the culture and most of all to the religion at the period. As Bychkov says: "Aesthetics in Orthodoxy does not have the status of an independent discipline. Its subject is virtually indistinguishable from the subject of theology."[55] If this is so, Eastern Orthodox "aesthetics" should presuppose an independent field of inquiry that obeys its own rules.

What becomes clear is that Eastern Orthodox "aesthetics" understood in this fashion claims a much wider scope than the familiar field of aesthetics. The interest of Bychkov in Florensky is excited exactly because Florensky's works express this tendency so strongly. When Florensky comes back to the subject of the ancient Russian icon in various of his works, he does so from a much wider perspective than an interest in a particular art form. The icon becomes an emblem of Eastern Orthodoxy, a connection between the immanent and the transcendental and as such a symbol in a specific sense of the word. According to Bychkov, Florensky's ideas on this reveal a typically "Orthodox world sense."[56]

The reason I bring Bychkov's ideas to attention is that what he says about aesthetics is very much the case with philosophy in general too. Mikhail Epstein's suggestion that we refer to much of Russian philosophy as "*filosofiia*" rather than "philosophy,"[57] thus adopting the Russian term in English to signal the specific nature of Russian philosophical thought, makes sense in this context. Russian philosophy, as practiced by its main representatives as Soloviev, Florensky, Berdyaev, and others, represents a distinct type of philosophizing, which falls outside the tradition of philosophy in the West since the Enlightenment. From a Western perspective, Russian philosophical thought would appear as "a kind of frenzied publicistic or essayistic writing, part literature and part sermon, a hodgepodge of fantasy, utopia,

and criticism."[58] This is, however, the very essence of *filosofiia*, which refuses to be confined within the framework of a narrow discipline but combines elements of thought which philosophy would find unacceptable. This is exactly what Florensky does and because of his encyclopedic mind he does it in a startling, even shocking fashion. Theology and magic, science and poetry are interwoven in various unexpected ways in the "total" discourse of his *filosofiia*.

It seems to me that the present state of Florensky scholarship has advanced enormously in respect to the fields of knowledge and the various topics that the Russian thinker was concerned with. At the same time, we are only at the beginning of the task of analyzing Russian philosophy—and by implication Florensky as one of its main representatives—on its own terms. With a "total" discourse of this kind it is imperative to realize that any aspect cannot be meaningfully separated from the whole.

## CONCLUSION AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS OF FLORENSKY STUDIES

The present chapter aims at giving a general outline of the turns that Florensky scholarship has been taking for the last one hundred years. It has been suggested that there are general trends in this development that are representative of the development of Russian philosophy in general during the same period and which, ultimately, are closely linked to the relationship between knowledge and power.

Three main stages of the reception of Florensky have been identified. The first one focuses on the view that Florensky's own contemporaries, some of whom were forced to emigrate to the West, had of his work. My thesis is that this early perception of Florensky was part of an attempt to promote the utopian idea of a "Russian Religious Renaissance" at the beginning of the twentieth century. Florensky, therefore, was mainly seen as a religious philosopher who had contributed to the "Renaissance" especially with his book *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*.

The second stage concerns the Soviet era and is divided into two periods. For the Bolsheviks in the first years after the October Revolution, Florensky was a scientist conducting experiments in chemistry, biology, and physics. After decades of obscurity, Florensky's work attracted attention once again in the 1960s and 1970s but this time it was the thinker's studies in various fields of the humanities that became important. In both cases, the religious dimension of Florensky's work was very largely suppressed.

The third and final stage deals with Florensky scholarship in the years after perestroika. I believe that Florensky was employed once more to serve a utopian religious "Renaissance." There has been a return to themes familiar from the early period (what I call "the first stage of reception") while the

works that were of interests in the Soviet period ("the second stage") have been interpreted again within the context of a religious revival.

At this stage, however, it still appears that Florensky studies can be an extremely fruitful field for future scholarly research. Firstly, as was mentioned above, there are important aspects of Florensky's writings which have attracted little attention so far. For instance, Florensky's relationship with the Russian Symbolists has been noticed only recently and it awaits a more systematic study. The links that connects Florensky to the Russian and European avant-garde can turn out to be much deeper and much more complicated that is realized at present, while the exact nature of Florensky's relationship to various esoteric currents is as yet unclear. In these and other cases, research can be illuminating both as regards Florensky but also Russian intellectual history at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Secondly and what is more important, our whole approach to this extremely challenging intellectual figure should be redefined. On the one hand, it would be unrealistic to expect studies that provide an in-depth analysis of all dimensions of Florensky's heritage. On the other, there should be an awareness that Florensky, at least as much as Nietzsche, cannot be properly understood out of the context of his overall work. Studying a certain text on its own could very well leave the impression that we are dealing with a religious/art historical/scientific study containing an original, even bizarre input from various, frequently unexpected, sources, including magic and occultism. This would be both true and untrue. Florensky does, indeed, tackle important, understudied subjects in a fascinating manner. At the same time, remaining at this level of analysis we miss a lot of Florensky. The icon, the dream, the symbol, the religious cult and ritual, and so forth, all these are of interest to Florensky in their capacity to suggest what lies beyond appearance, beyond immediate sensory experience and ultimately beyond rationalism. If this view is accepted, we should be looking forward to studies on Florensky, which however specialized, would also contribute toward an understanding of his general philosophical position.

It is frequently suggested by Russian scholars—and Florensky himself gives ample grounds for such an interpretation—that Florensky's philosophy is representative of a tendency, typical of Russian thought, which counteracts modern, Western rationalistic philosophy.[59] It seems much closer to the truth, that Florensky by borrowing and recasting themes from Russian thought allies himself with a major stand within European thought itself which lead to what we term postmodernism. I, therefore, believe that it would be useful for future studies to consider Florensky in such a context. It seems to me that Florensky has a lot of valuable insights to offer in the endeavor of modernity to find alternative, supposedly more genuine ways than those of rationalism, to describe the world and man's place in it.

In this sense, the translation of works by Florensky in English and other languages is a positive development in more respects than one. Above all,

the conditions are created in which the place of Russian thought within the European philosophical tradition can be radically reconsidered. While Russian literature has a secure place within the European canon, Russian philosophy has remained somewhat peripheral. What seems to have been overlooked is that various of the themes that become prominent in Western postmodern philosophy have long been a permanent feature of Russian thought. And this is very probably nowhere as clear and pronounced as with Florensky. One cannot be but struck by the closeness of ideas and even language between Florensky and the late Heidegger,[60] for example. As there is obviously no question of direct influence, one has to consider the possibility that the Russian thinker stood at the forefront of ideas we usually associate with developments within Western philosophy.

It, therefore, seems to me that the most valuable direction in future studies on Florensky would be the one that leads not toward predictions of a religious Renaissance but toward a definition and analysis of the type of philosophical discourse that Florensky exemplifies. There is a lot to be done in this field and, hopefully, future studies would shift the emphasis away from practices of power and toward the production of knowledge. This, though, can too prove an example of a utopian project, as knowledge has always been tied, in more ways than one, to power. It is only in the accumulation of knowledge and studies which approach a problem from various perspectives, in this case work done in Russia but also increasingly in the West that one can get to a rich, multifaceted view of an intellectual of the rank of Florensky.

## NOTES

1. After Nikolai Zernov's book of this title, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

2. Evgeny Trubetskoy, *Umozrenie v kraskakh: Tri ocherka o russkoi ikone* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1965). English translation in Evgeny Trubetskoy, *Icons: Theology in Colour* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973)

3. Andrei Rublev's *Holy Trinity* icon, probably one of the best known medieval images, is seen by Trubetskoy as having "expressed the inner history of Russian religious and national self-consciousness" (Trubetskoy, "Rosiia v ee ikone" [Russia in Her Icons], *Umozrenie v kraskakh,* 117–18; my translation), while later for Florensky it becomes a "symbol of the Russian spirit" (Florensky on Andrei Rublev's icon in Viktor Bychkov, *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky* [Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993], 37).

4. The *Iconostasis* was written in 1922 and first published in *Bogoslovskie trudy* [Theological Studies] 9 (1972): 80–148. English translation in Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999; reprint 2000).

5. The essay on "Reverse Perspective" was written in 1919 and published posthumously in *Trudy po znakovim sistemam* 3 (1967): 381–416. English translation in Pavel Florensky, *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art*, ed. Nicoletta Misler (London: Reaktion, 2002).

6. See Vladimir Piskunov, "Pavel Florenskii i Andrei Belyi (k postanovke problemy)" [Pavel Florensky and Andrei Bely (On the State of the Problem)], in *P. A. Florenskii i kul'tura ego vremeni* [P. A. Florensky and the Culture of His Time], ed. Michael Hagemeister and Nina Kauchtschischwili (Marburg, Ger.: Blaue Hörner Verl., 1995).

7. The correspondence of Bely and Florensky has been published in *Pavel Florenskii i simvolisti* [Pavel Florensky and the Symbolists], selection and commentary by E. V. Ivanova (Moscow: Iaziki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2004), 433–99.

8. For the correspondence of Ivanov and Florensky, see Viacheslav Ivanov, "Perepiska s Florenskim" [Correspondence with Florensky], in *Arkhivnie materialy i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1999), 93–121.

9. Andrei Shishkin has written several articles on the relationship between Viacheslav Ivanov's and Florensky's understanding of the symbol. See, for example, Andrei Shishkin, "Realizm Viacheslava Ivanova i o. Pavla Florenskogo" [The Realism of Viacheslav Ivanov and of Father Pavel Florensky], in Hagemeister and Kauchtschischwili, *P.A. Florenskii i kul'tura ego vremeni*.

10. I discuss this in greater detail in "'Beauty Will Save the World': The Revival of Romantic Theories of the Symbol in Pavel Florensky's Writings," *Slavonica* 14, no. 1 (April 2008): 44–56.

11. Pavel Florensky, *Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny* [The Pillar and Ground of Truth] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravda," 1990), 2:500–506. There is an English translation in Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

12. Florensky, *Stolp*, 506–15.

13. Florensky, *Stolp*, 540–44.

14. Nicoletta Misler, "Pavel Florensky as an Art Historian," in Florensky, *Beyond Vision*, 61.

15. For texts by members of RAKhN (Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences), as well as critical essays by contemporary scholars, see *Experiment* 3 (1997) (the whole issue is devoted to RAKhN).

16. One of the few authors to have paid attention to this aspect of Florensky's work is L. I. Vasilenko, "O magii i okkul'tizme v nasledii o. Pavla Florenskogo" [On Magic and Occultism in Florensky's Heritage], *Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo Gumanitarnogo universiteta* 3 (2004): 81–99. I consider Florensky's borrowing specifically of theosophical ideas in his theory of the icon in "At the Crossroads of Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Esotericism: The Case of Pavel Florensky's," in *The Initiated Artist: A Methodological Introduction to Western Esotericism, 18th–20th Centuries*, ed. M. Bax and A. Kroon (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).

17. Misler, "Pavel Florensky as an Art Historian," 57–60.

18. An interesting example is Florensky's conception of "reverse time" at the beginning of the *Iconostasis*, an attempt to describe the temporal conception underlying dreams and visual art. His idea makes interesting connections with Freud and Einstein. See my article "Florensky's 'Reverse Time' and Bakhtin's 'Chronotope'—a Russian Contribution to the Theory of the Visual Arts," *Slovo* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 200): 101–14; abstract available from www.ssees.ac.uk/slovo/vol152ab.htm.

19. Pavel Florensky, "Ob odnoi predposylke mirovozzreniia" [Of a Prerequisite of a Worldview], in *Sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Works] (Moscow, 1994), 1:71.

20. George Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* [The Paths of Russian Theology] (Paris: [s.n.], 1937), 495.

21. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, 101.

22. Zernov, *Russian Religious Renaissance*, 102.

23. Nikolai Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), 177.

24. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 408.

25. Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* [The Paths of Russian Theology], 495.

26. Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* [The Paths of Russian Theology], 495.

27. Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy, 1890–1920* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 129.

28. Sergei Bulgakov, "Sviashchennik o. Pavel Florensky" [Father Pavel Florensky], in Pavel Florensky, *U vodorazdelov mysli* [At the Watersheds of Thought] (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1985), 15; my translation.

29. Bulgakov, "Sviashchennik o. Pavel Florensky," 15.

30. Bulgakov, "Sviashchennik o. Pavel Florensky," 7.

31. Bulgakov, "Sviashchennik o. Pavel Florensky," 7.

32. Bulgakov, "Sviashchennik o. Pavel Florensky," 12.

33. Bulgakov,"Sviashchennik O. Pavel Florensky," 10.

34. Florensky's texts were preserved by his family.

35. Cited in Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 176.

36. See M. Osharov, "To Alien Shores: The 1922 Expulsion of Intellectuals from the Soviet Union," *Russian Review* 32 (July 1973): 294–98; Sergei Khorizhii, "Filosofskii korabl'" [The Philosophy Ship], *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 9, 1990, and June 6, 1990; Stuart Finkel, *On the Ideological Front: The Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007)

37. Sergei Khorizhii, "Filosofskii korabl'" [The Philosophy Ship].

38. The case of the Bakhtin brothers is telling of the isolation but also of the strange channels of information. While Mikhail Bakhtin, the great scholar, remained in the Soviet Union, his brother Nikolai left for Britain where he studied at Cambridge and eventually founded the linguistics department at Birmingham University. One day in a secondhand bookshop in Paris Nikolai came across a book by Mikhail, which was almost the only sign he got from Mikhail, after correspondence with his family had become dangerous and had ceased in late 1920s. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), especially "The Corsican Twins," 16–35.

39. Stanislav Dzhimbinov, "The Return of Russian Philosophy," in *Russian Thought after Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage*, ed. James P. Scanlan (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 11–23.

40. Dzhimbinov, "The Return of Russian Philosophy," 17–19.

41. See An Shukman, *The Moscow-Tartu Semiotics School: A Bibliography of Works and Comments in English* (Netherlands: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1978)

42. Pavel Florensky, "Obratnaia perspektiva" [Reverse Perspective], *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* [Researches on Sign Systems] 3 (1967): 381–416. For an English translation see Florensky, *Beyond Vision*.

43. For a critical overview of Florensky's text and later studies in Russian on "reverse perspective" see my paper with Martin Kemp, "'Reverse Perspective': Historical Fallacies and an Alternative View," in *The Visual Mind*, ed. Michele Emmer (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 2:399–433.

44. There is still no English translation of Zhegin's work. I thank Professor Boris Uspensky for bringing to my attention the existence of a German translation, which makes the book more accessible to the Western public. For an overview of Zhegin's position see my joint paper with Martin Kemp, "'Reverse Perspective': Historical Fallacies and an Alternative View," in Emmer, *The Visual Mind*, 2:405–16.

45. Lev Zhegin, "Vospominaniia o P. A. Florenskom" [Memories of P. A. Florensky], in *P. A. Florensky: Pro et Contra*, ed. K. Isupov (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo Gumanitarnogo Instituta, 1996), 162–73.

46. For a useful discussion of this issue, see Vladimir Katasonov, "Integral Reason: Science and Religion in Russian Culture," *Science and Spirit Magazine*, 2002.

47. Dzhimbinov, "Return of Russian Philosophy," 22.

48. Dzhimbinov, "Return of Russian Philosophy," 22.

49. Lossky's *History of Russian Philosophy* came out in 500 to 1,000 copies in 1954, for example.

50. In 1983, the sale of Losev's book on Soloviev was banned in the big cities and was confined to distant small towns and villages.

51. Father Vladimir (Fedotov), "Pavel Florenskii kak misioner XXI veka" [Pavel Florensky as a Missionary of the Twenty-first Century], in *Pamiati Pavla Florenskogo: Filosofiia, Muzyika: Sbornik statei k 120-letiiu dnia rozdeniia o. Pavla* [In Memory of Pavel Florensky: Philosophy, Music: A Collection of Articles on the 120th Anniversary of the Birth of Father Pavel], ed. S. Sigitov (St. Petersburg: DB, 2002), 8.

52. Father Vladimir (Fedotov), "Pavel Florenskii kak misioner XXI veka," 8.

53. Father Vladimir (Fedotov), "Pavel Florenskii kak misioner XXI veka," 12.

54. Viktor Bychkov, *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993; first in Russian in 1990).

55. Bychkov, *The Aesthetic Face of Being*, 26.

56. Bychkov, *The Aesthetic Face of Being*, 57.

57. Mikhail Epstein, "Symposion and Russian *Filosofia*," *Symposion: A Journal of Russian Thought* 1 (November 1996).

58. Epstein, "Symposion and Russian *Filosofia*."

59. See previous section, especially Bychkov's distinction between Western and Eastern Orthodox aesthetics.

60. See the section on Florensky and Heidegger in my article "Beauty Will Save the World."

# II

# HERETICS

# 5

# The Totalitarian Languages of Utopia and Dystopia: Fidelius and Havel

*Veronika Tuckerová*

Totalitarian language, the official language in totalitarian societies, is often characterized by having lost its relation to the world, to reality. The editors of this collection in their introduction suggest that Communism has been connected to philosophy, intellectuals, and utopian answers to life's challenges since its inception. However, by post-Stalinist, late-Communist era, Communism was connected to ideology instead of philosophy, ideological hacks instead of intellectuals, ritual and ideological gobbledygook instead of answers to life's problems, and petty materialistic egoism of atomized individuals instead of utopia. The gobbledygook ideologizing of language cost it its relation to reality. Still, the relation between language and reality is far from being straightforward. Much of twentieth-century philosophy has debated meaning and reference, the complex relation between language and the world. Some views of language have disconnected it from reality altogether. From such a perspective, claiming that late-totalitarian ideological language was disconnected from reality is trivially true, but not interesting, since all language is disconnected from reality. Conversely, if ordinary language is closely linked to reality and late totalitarian language is just gobbledygook, there is not much to gain from studying it. Another possibility though, is that totalitarian language, though disconnected from reality in a way that ordinary language is not, still reveals much about the world of its creators in a circuitous way. Though totalitarian language does not mean what it says, and does not say what it means, it can still have a meaning and is self-referential.

Communist language was discussed by the Czech literary critic Petr Fidelius and the playwright and essayist Václav Havel. Havel used the term "eva-

sive thinking" for thinking that led to the creation of an "immobile system of intellectual and phraseological schemata," which "separated thought from its immediate contact with reality and thus crippled its capacity to intervene in that reality effectively."[1] In his later essay *The Power of the Powerless* (1978) Havel developed his well known analysis of post-totalitarianism. Havel pointed out how the actual words of a slogan displayed in a greengrocer's store window serve as a *sign* with a familiar code: "the greengrocer declares his loyalty . . . by accepting the prescribed ritual, by accepting appearances as reality, by accepting the given rules of the game."[2] The greengrocer partakes in a ritual: he hides his true motivation—fear—behind ideology, which serves as an alibi. In post-totalitarian society, ideological language replaced language that attempted to refer to reality.

The Czech critic Petr Fidelius offered an analysis of the language that was used by the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s, the language that most people learned to distrust and ignore.[3] Fidelius showed that this language reflected specific ideological thinking rather than the world. Paradoxically, it gave a true account of its totalitarian character. He argued that in a totalitarian society language becomes a tool in manipulating minds. Fidelius showed how language as a tool of power can paralyze the human mind in two ways: First, Communist totalitarianism fosters a distrust of words, forcing people to doubt that words are somehow connected with reality. Second, the free circulation of notions and words in society through which we revise and adapt the meanings of words according to our shifting understanding of reality is frozen and a static mechanic relation between words and notions is introduced instead. The result is the introduction of new speech, in which words have static meanings and so cannot be adapted to convey new ideas or shifting reality. Language as a tool of manipulation is also a major theme in Orwell's dystopia *1984*. In his reading of this novel, Richard Rorty claimed that there is no necessary connection between *any* language and reality, which implies that there is no distinction between the use of language in totalitarian societies and in free societies.[4]

In this chapter I intend to present critically these three distinct positions about totalitarian language and suggest that Fidelius's criticism avoids Rorty's implausible conflation of totalitarian language and ordinary language and Havel's simplistic rejection in his earlier essay of what he perceived as "pseudo-ideological thinking" without attempting to interpret how it is connected with the social reality that generates it. This social reality and the role of ideology is however the theme of Havel's *The Power of the Powerless*, which presents a distinctly anti-utopian thinking. In this essay, Havel lays out the fundamental principles of the human rights movement Charter 77, which is based on *living in truth*. Havel sets this existential, prepolitical condition, against any abstract projects "for an ideal political or economic order," which was irrelevant in the post-totalitarian context.

## RORTY'S INTERPRETATION OF *1984*

The manipulation of the mind by means of manipulating language is one of the most memorable themes in Orwell's *1984*. Unlike other interpreters of *1984*, Rorty claimed that Orwell was not a moral realist who believes in the existence of moral facts independent of language. Richard Rorty offered an anti-realist interpretation of Winston Smith's famous words: "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."[5] According to Rorty, "it does not matter whether 'two plus two is four' is true, much less whether this truth is 'subjective' or 'corresponds to external reality.' All that matters is that if you do believe it, you can say it without getting hurt. In other words, what matters is your ability to talk to other people about what seems to you true, not what is in fact true. If we take care of freedom, truth can take care of itself."[6]

Rorty thought that language never refers to the world, in any type of society. In his poststructuralist interpretation of *1984*, he held the opposite standpoint to George Orwell, Havel, and Fidelius. In his two last books, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, Orwell pointed out that the essence of totalitarian regimes is in their use of language. Orwell was well aware of the manipulative qualities of language. Orwell's *Newspeak*, the new official language of *Oceania*, which was supposed to replace standard English by the year 2050, is a good example of such manipulation. In the year 1984, "there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole mean of communication," writes Orwell in the "Principles of Newspeak."[7] In 1984, the leading articles in the *Times* were written in it, and the party members were to use Newspeak words and grammatical constructions in their everyday speech. Likewise, Fidelius analyzed the Communist language used in editorials of the Czechoslovak Communist Party daily newspaper *Rudé právo* during the 1970s and 1980s. The parallel with Orwell's Newspeak, the aim of which was to "make all other modes of thought impossible," is inevitable. "Other" means here all modes opposing the "worldview and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc." The Orwellian newspeak introduces new words, but mainly omits many words and prescriptively redefines the meaning of the remaining ones—"stripping of such words . . . of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever."[8] It is clear that Orwell always drew a line between the totalitarian language and "standard English." He saw the gradual introduction of Newspeak that would eventually replace standard English at the core of the process of turning free society into a totalitarian state.

Richard Rorty interprets Orwell to fit his own standpoint. Referring to the later part of *1984*, in which O'Brien explains to Winston why he "must be tortured rather than simply shot" Rorty claims that there are no "plain moral facts out there in the world, nor any truths independent of language,

nor any neutral ground on which to stand and argue that either torture or kindness are preferable to the other."[9] According to Rorty, Orwell gives us an "alternative perspective, from which we . . . could describe the political history of our century." In this interpretation, Orwell's "alternative" is a part of "playing off scenarios against contrasting scenarios, projects against alternative projects." Rorty attempts to show that Orwell himself "was doing the same *kind* of thing as his opponents, the apologists for Stalin, were doing."[10] Rorty affirmatively quotes Orwell from *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*: "A writer attempting anything that is not coldly "intellectual" can do very little with words in their primary meanings. He gets his effect, if at all, by using words in a tricky roundabout way." Rorty believes that he discovered Orwell to be contradicting himself, denying his own belief in the existence of "plain facts" independent of language, in the ability of language to communicate these facts. Rorty suggested that Orwell himself used the deceptive character of language, in *Animal Farm*, to "throw the incredibly complex and sophisticated character of leftist political discussion into high and absurd relief by retelling the political history of his century in terms suitable for children."[11]

The fact that Orwell was aware of the multiple meanings of words does not imply that he used language to obfuscate and confuse the reader by disconnecting language from reality; it means simply that as a writer he was naturally aware of the figurative meanings of words, and of rhetoric. Nothing proves Orwell's standpoint on language and its misuses by power more than his own novels. Sensitive inhabitants of totalitarian states were able to recognize the shifts in meanings of words following political changes: For example, words like "cosmopolitan" served as codes for anti-Semitism, "sabotage" for economic mismanagement, and so forth. Rorty denies this experience, arguing that such differences do not exist. Rorty's conflation of ordinary and totalitarian language runs counter to the everyday experiences of the subjects of totalitarian societies, and numerous writings of dissident authors. It constitutes a radical apology for totalitarianism.

## HAVEL'S EVASIVE THINKING: LANGUAGE COULD REFLECT REALITY

In the early 1960s, Václav Havel analyzed the official use of language in Communist Czechoslovakia. His essay *On Evasive Thinking,* was originally written as a speech and delivered at a Union of Czechoslovak Writer's conference in Prague in June of 1965. Havel brought an example from an article in *Literární noviny* (Literary Newspaper), in which its author praised the current "liberal" situation in Czechoslovakia, the fact that the citizens of Prague were able to openly express criticism when a stone window ledge

came loose and fell off a building, killing a woman. In Havel's view, the author of this article trivialized this outcry by appealing to the readers not to limit themselves to such "local matters," but to "focus on themes that were more worthy of the dignity of the human mission and more appropriate to the humanistic notion of man." Literature should, according to this writer, "free itself from all petty, local, municipal matters and begin, at last, to deal with mankind and our prospects for the future."

This argument is for Havel an example of what he calls "evasive thinking" (*vyhýbavé myšlení*). The essence of such thinking is "deformed and fetishized" patterns, which become an "immobile system of intellectual and phraseological schemata," which, when applied to reality, tends to "separate thought from its immediate contact with reality." This concept is very similar to the one which Petr Fidelius outlined when he wrote of the static, mechanic relationship between notions and words. Havel called the linguistic means leading to schematizations "verbal mysticism." On the one hand, there is a "ritualization of language." "From being a means of signifying reality, and of enabling us to come to an understanding of it, language seems to have become an end in itself."[12] Certain words "ceased to be a sign for a category," they assumed a "magic" quality and are capable of "transforming" "reality." "It's enough to call a fallen window ledge a 'local matter,' and criticism of the way buildings are maintained as 'municipal criticism,' and we immediately feel that nothing so terrible has happened."[13] Certain linguistic schemes, among them "false contextualization" are more dangerous: A concrete, particular problem becomes dissolved in the "vagueness of all the possible wider contexts." The problem of falling window ledges becomes less important if we see it in the context of the prospects for the future of all mankind.

Language as a mean of expression and its stagnation, deformation and fetishization are among the most prominent themes in Havel's work. The idea of language turning into rigid schemes and clichés is the foundation of his 1964 play, the *Garden Party*, as well as other plays. The use of clichés, "dead" verbal expressions which were separated from reality, functions in Havel's plays as means to characterize the inauthenticity of his characters, in the midst of social rituals devoid of meaning. As other contributors to this anthology like Ivars Ijels and Aurelian Crăiuţu noted, much of the dissident criticism of Communism was for its inauthenticity. One possible meaning of inauthenticity is in Heideggerian terms of the kind Patočka used (see Bradatan's chapter here). Havel however interpreted inauthenticity in his plays in linguistic terms, as an inauthentic misuse of language.

Havel's concept of "evasive thinking" is a useful tool in characterization of language in totalitarian state. It is especially valuable because of the moment in which Havel came up with the concept: during the so-called liberalization process in the mid-1960s. Havel demasked this apparent liberal

state of affairs. He showed that language is capable of reflecting reality, but ceases to do so when corrupted by totalitarian use. Later, in *The Power of the Powerless*, Havel expands on his analysis of official language under Communism and characterizes the role of ideology in the specific social context of post-totalitarian society.

## HAVEL: *THE POWER OF THE POWERLESS*—AGAINST THE POLITICS OF UTOPIA

In the *Power of the Powerless* (1978), Havel describes the relationship between language and ideology, or rather, the mechanism by which authentic language devolves into ideology. *The Power of the Powerless* is consistent with his essay *On Evasive Thinking* in claiming that totalitarian-ideological language loses its reference to reality, but goes beyond it to explain how ideology replaces reality and becomes ever increasing component of power in the post-totalitarian (post-Stalinist, late Communist) society. Havel examines as an example a greengrocer who displays in his shop window a slogan, "Workers of the world, unite!" Since, as Havel argues, it is very unlikely that the greengrocer is truly enthusiastic about the prospect of the unity among the workers of the world, the slogan assumes a new meaning unrelated to the actual words. It becomes a *sign*: "The slogan is really a sign, and as such contains a subliminal but very definite message. Verbally, it might be expressed this way: 'I, the greengrocer XY, live here and know what I must do. I behave in the manner expected of me. I can be depended upon and am beyond reproach. I am obedient and therefore I have the right to be left in peace."[14] Thus the "real meaning of the greengrocer's slogan has nothing to do with what the text of the slogan actually says."[15] As a *sign*, it allows the greengrocer to conceal his "low" obedience behind ideology. By accepting these rules—as all other people who accept the same rules—he is partaking in the ritual; he becomes a component of the "auto-totality" of the system.[16]

Havel describes the leading role of ideology in the condition of post-totalitarianism. Ideology, originally a bridge between the system and the individual "as an individual," becomes "a bridge between the system and the individual as a component of the system."[17] Ideology always has a tendency to separate itself from reality; under totalitarianism, however, "there is nothing to prevent ideology from becoming more and more removed from reality, gradually turning into what it has already become in the post-totalitarian system: a world of appearances, a mere ritual, a formalized language deprived of semantic contact with reality and transformed into a system of ritual signs that replace reality with pseudo-reality."[18] Unlike in his earlier essay, *On Evasive Thinking*, in which Havel criticized a use of

language in which words cease to signify meaning, in the *Power of the Powerless*, language becomes ideology, a system of signs that "replace reality with pseudo-reality." In words resembling Orwell's Newspeak, Havel writes how the language of ideology masks totalitarian practices in post-totalitarian society:

> The post-totalitarian system touches people at every step, but it does so with its ideological gloves on. This is why the life in the system is so thoroughly permeated with hypocrisy and lies: government by bureaucracy is called popular government; the working class is enslaved in the name of the working class; the complete degradation of the individual is presented as his ultimate liberation; depriving people of information is called making it available; the use of power to manipulate is called the public control of power, and the arbitrary abuse of power is called observing the legal code; the repression of culture is called its development; the expansion of imperial influence is presented as support for the oppressed; the lack of free expression becomes the highest form of freedom; farcical elections become the highest form of democracy; banning independent thought becomes the most scientific of world views; military occupation becomes fraternal assistance.[19]

"The Power of the Powerless" is an analysis of everydayness in post-totalitarian society.[20] Havel contrasts *life in a lie* (*život ve lži*) with *life in truth* (*život v pravdě*). Every person desires human dignity, but at the same time every person is capable of rejecting authenticity, of coming to terms with living within the lie.[21] *Living a lie* is the basic pillar of the post-totalitarian system. Everybody has the option to reject the *life in a lie* by not accepting the rituals, not succumbing to the ideology: if the greengrocer refuses to put up the sign, he will recover his suppressed dignity; he aspires to *life in truth*. Underneath the *life in a lie* lies a "*hidden sphere* of life in its real aims."[22] This *hidden sphere* is a starting point, a condition and foundation for *life in truth*. Life in truth does not consist merely of writing a letter of protest; it is any act that rejects manipulation.

Havel's essay was written in the aftermath of the declaration of Charter 77, the Czechoslovak dissident human rights movement and the Socratic death of its philosopher-leader, Jan Patočka (see Bradatan in this volume), to whose memory the article is dedicated. *The Power of the Powerless* is Havel's commentary on its goals and principles, as well as a consideration of its immediate effects. Havel rejects the ideas of "oppositional" politics of some of his friends (or dissident opponents, which Havel does not name) that draw on past political conditions irrelevant for the post-totalitarian system. In post-totalitarianism, where any politics in traditional sense has been eliminated, opposition in a classical sense is impossible. Instead, any "oppositional" activity stems from the prepolitical, *hidden sphere* of *life in truth*. Charter 77 is one of the manifestations of *life in truth*; the hidden,

the prepolitical sphere becomes the one "natural point of departure for all activities that work against the automatism of the system."[23] Most of the impulses in the Soviet Bloc came not from politicians, but from philosophers, scientists, and ordinary people.[24] Alternative political models are irrelevant: "they no longer speak to the hidden sphere."[25]

> Abstract projects for an ideal political or economic order do not interest them [people] to anything like the same extent—and rightly so—not only because everyone knows how little chance they have of succeeding, but also because today people feel that the less political policies are derived from a concrete and human here and now and the more they fix their sights on an abstract "someday," the more easily they can degenerate into new forms of human enslavement.[26]

Havel expresses a profound distrust of any utopian thinking, any "abstract projects for an ideal political or economic order" against which he positions the *life in truth*, human dignity as an existential starting point for any activities which work against the automatism (*samopohyb*) of the system.

Havel's program for the human rights movement Charter 77 follows from these main principles: the purpose of the movement's activities is a defense of a person rather than formulation of a new political program. Havel explains the *legalistic* nature of Charter 77 and other similar movements in the Soviet Bloc: they set out to insist that the regimes adhere to the various set of laws that it signed (e.g., Helsinki Agreement), "achieving respect for the law is one of their main aims."[27] The effect of the appeal to the laws rests on the fact that the system depends on the law (as it does on ideology): "Because the system cannot do without the law, because it is hopelessly tied down by the necessity of pretending the laws are observed, it is compelled to react in some way to such appeals."[28] The effects of this attitude may seemingly not be great, yet Havel preempts such objections by restating the "anti-utopian" foundations of the Charter 77: "But an essential part of the 'dissident' attitude is that it comes out of the reality of the human here and now. It places more importance on often repeated and consistent concrete action—even though it may be inadequate and though it may ease only insignificantly the suffering of a single insignificant citizen—than it does in some abstract fundamental solution in an uncertain future."[29] In his essay *On Evasive Thinking*, Havel was more radical than his contemporaries in demasking the apparent state of liberalization. In the *Power of the Powerless* he rejects forms of "utopian" political thinking irrelevant for post-totalitarian society, and insists on prepolitical "life in truth" and defense of human and civil rights.

There is an interesting parallel between Havel's insistence on legality—on appealing to the laws that the Communist regime signed but not adhered to—and the writing of another *samizdat* author of a younger generation,

Petr Fidelius, who also decided to take the Communist regime literally. Fidelius showed that by analyzing the language of the official Communist propaganda, the regime gives a true account of its totalitarian character.

## PETR FIDELIUS: LANGUAGE AS A MIRROR OF TOTALITARIAN POWER

In his essays on Communist language in the collection *Řeč komunistické moci* (Language of Communist power, 1998) the Czech critic Petr Fidelius went further than Václav Havel in revealing the surprising character of this language. *People, Democracy, Socialism*, the first of three essays on the language of Communist power by Petr Fidelius, was written in 1978. By then the Communist rhetoric in Czechoslovakia was not developing new ideas, as in the early 1950s, it was not trying to communicate anything new. At the time when Communist speech was generally understood as lies or meaningless tittle-tattle, as a language manipulated ad hoc to defend current Communist party politics, Fidelius decided to subject it to a semantic analysis. He did so with much wit and with an interest, which could have almost seemed bizarre to other Czech critics who would choose any other topic just to escape the mediocre "normalization" atmosphere of the 1970s and 1980s. Fidelius revealed that the official Communist language is not meaningless, but rather constructs a cohesive, "logical" system (in a particular sense of "logical"), and reflected an ideological image of the world. Fidelius argued that paradoxically, when its own words are analyzed, Communist power gives a true account of its own totalitarian character. Importantly, he pointed out that the distinctive features of the Communist speech were developed already before the "socialist world order" was established in Czechoslovakia after the Communist takeover in 1948. "Communist speech is not mere propaganda, purposefully turned to the outside, but it 'limits, binds' the mind of its producers: they were bound by certain vision of the world."[30]

It is not clear who is talking in the editorials of *Rudé právo*, the Czechoslovak Communist daily, as much as it is not clear to whom they are addressed. The voice talks in first person plural. Is it the "state" addressing its "citizens" or the Communist Party talking to its member? Although the quoted texts do not mention it directly, the articles defending the socialist system were apparently a response to the Charter 77 Declaration Document that was written and made public at the beginning of 1977. Paradoxically, as was discussed in the section on the "Power of the Powerless," the Charter 77 Document called on the Communist government to adhere to its own laws that included the 1975 Helsinki final act on Human Rights that it signed into law. Charter 77 Declaration provided an opportunity for the Communist regime to state and defend its own positions in the *Rudé*

*právo* editorials. There is a notable parallel between Fidelius's analysis and the text of Charter 77—both decided to take the regime's acts and words seriously to show how it denounces itself. According to Fidelius, language has a transcendental quality which betrays those who use it as a mean for ideological manipulation.

In a society undergoing a process of "normalization" or "consolidation" (terms used by official propaganda to describe the repressive period which followed the Soviet invasion in 1968), the Communist newspeak was ubiquitous. Ideological slogans were regular part of the visual scene: banners on buildings and bridges, posters in store windows, fliers in bulletin boards, without anybody paying them any attention. Among the key Communist language concepts were: "the people," "democracy," and "socialism." Fidelius's method is to show how these specific key words of the Communist language are being used. These words are so tainted by their ideological subtext and connotations that it was hardly possible to use them after the fall of Communism; they became an indistinguishable part of the historic ideological context. His main example is "people" (*lid*). Although the word "people" is in the Communist propaganda ubiquitous, it is also a word with a rather blurry and unclear meaning. Does it refer to all inhabitants of a certain state, or merely to some of them? Fidelius calls the conceptualization in which only some inhabitants are part of "the people" "restrictive." This is the sense in which the Communist propaganda used the word "people" and defined according to its shifting present needs who belongs to this entity and who doesn't. "Working" is the typical attribute of "people" (*pracující lid*); these are also the terms in which the word is defined in the 1971 edition of the Czech Dictionary. Fidelius brought several examples to show how the word "people" is used, and who, within that particular use, is apparently not a part of this entity. For example, it appears that "artists are not part of 'people,'" since, as it is written in one editorial, "artists" are going "with our people and our people go with them."[31] "It is the people who are the source of all the power in the state," says the Czechoslovak (Communist) Constitution of 1948, and the 1960 Constitution asserts that "all power belongs to working people." Since "working people" are entitled to "all power," it is important to know who is part of the people and who isn't, argues Fidelius. Sometimes the definition of "people" is wider, sometimes narrower. Democracy in the socialist state is here "for the working people, for the overwhelming majority of the people." It is therefore disturbing to realize that some part of the population, even a small minority, is not a part of "the people," and therefore is not entitled to democratic rights. According to Communist propaganda, the scope of "the people" can in various historical times differ. However, as Fidelius points out, the core of "people" is composed of the "immediate producers of material values." The "core" is surrounded by various temporary "peels," other strata of society that might

become part of "the people" in those historic periods when they constitute the "progressive role in history."

It is apparent that the Communist Party decides who belongs to "the people" and who does not. The party can decide so because it possesses the knowledge of "historic truth"—this "possession of truth" is a stated axiom, which is never further discussed or defended. The Communist Party is entitled to differentiate among groups of people and decide whether or not they are part of the "people" because it relies on the "Marxist Leninist scientific position." The core of the "people," the "producers of material values," is the moving force of history. Led by the Communist Party, they "objectively" and "consciously" create history. It is assumed that the "producers of material values" are the progressive element in history. This is not being disputed, it is an axiom on which stand the other elements of the Communist worldview. The "people" are conscious of their historical role due to the guidance of the Communist Party. Without this leadership, "the people" are unable to move purposefully, to think and decide "independently." When ideological influence is weak, "there is a space for antagonistic tendencies."[32] "The guidance of the leading force in history is the *raison d'etre* of the Party." Thus, it becomes apparent that the party takes over the role of leadership from the "people."

Occasionally, the party becomes "the core of the working class." This happens when all the "peels" or all the temporary components of "people" fell off the "core," and even the core itself is led astray from its historically progressive path. Then, the party itself fills the role of the "core," it becomes the "core of the core," temporarily taking on itself the role of the "people," until the seduced "core" finds the way back from its confusion. "In times of crisis, the Party itself forms 'all people.'" Consequently, the *people* is the *party*, which could easily be one of the Orwellian oxymoronic slogans. However, we can continue the reduction even further. As some historical examples demonstrate, even members of the party can be sometimes misled, and therefore in extreme situations it may happen, that one person, one leader remains the essence of the party. As a matter of fact he substitutes for the people as a whole. Consequently, sometimes the "people" equals a single leader. The words "party" and "people" can therefore substitute for each other. Fidelius calls this process "nuclear reduction of the first or second degree."

This kind of reasoning has dangerous social consequences, and as Fidelius shows, it is amazing that the Communist power does not attempt to conceal its tendencies on the theoretical level, but rather constantly expresses them explicitly, in daily newspapers or proclamations on banners or bulletin boards. Irrespective of its power, it is notable that this ideological reasoning bears basic logical fallacies. The fallacy of division and the fallacy of composition are the common fallacies in reasoning about parts

and wholes: "The fallacy of composition may occur when we reason that a property belonging to the parts is possessed by the whole." Similarly, "the fallacy of division may occur when we reason that a property belonging to the whole is possessed by the parts."[33] It is implied in the Communist propaganda that in extreme cases, as described above, the leader equals all the people. The Communist ideology, as its language reveals, thus commits the classical fallacy of division. According to its proclamations, power belongs to all the people. In extreme situations, the sum of all the people can consist of only a single figure, one member of the leadership of the Communist party, who thus "logically" assumes all power.

In a later essay, *Totalitarian Language* (1989), Fidelius analyzed Communist speech as a tool for manipulation. At the time when the Communist regime becomes "totalitarian," it is no longer characterized by revolutionary zeal and physical brutality. The leader of the totalitarian regime does not have an ideal of which he wants to persuade the people. He becomes interested only in power. In this stage language becomes a tool of manipulation. The goal is to rule over the human mind by means of language. Fidelius shows how language is being manipulated in order to prevent people from thinking for themselves. The very ability of people to think is to be paralyzed. Thinking is dependent on language; speech gives a form to thought and connects the human mind with the world. In this respect, Fidelius echoes Wittgenstein's philosophy of language: There is no thinking outside language, and language cannot be private, but always shared by at least two people.[34]

Yet, Fidelius holds that it is characteristic of words to have multiplicity of meanings; words never fully capture our thought. The imperfection of language is positive, we constantly need to think about the meanings of words and with every new use we give them new meaning, thus reshaping our thoughts. The gap between the word and the idea we want to express creates a space for a question, which forces us to rethink the idea again and again. Fidelius characterizes this process as a "renewal of a fragile balance between our thinking and reality."[35]

Fidelius then shows how to paralyze the human mind by using language as a tool of power. Words in new speech have static meanings. Mechanic, rigid relationship between words and the reality to which they refer is thus established. There is no space left for a question and creation of new meanings. Thus, there is no space left for thinking between language and reality.

## CONCLUSION

Fidelius discovered that the Communist language refers to an "imaginary" world, but conveys in a coded fashion the political reality of totalitarianism.

His strongest impression, he writes, was to discover that "in its own words the Communist regime gives completely truthful picture of its own nature." This is a great discovery against the background of an almost universal dismissal of Communist language as a meaningless, incoherent propaganda. Against Rorty's view, Fidelius proves the existence of separate, distinctive totalitarian language, reflecting a type of ideological thinking, which exists alongside "ordinary" language. Havel as well noted how the ideological language differs from "ordinary" language and described how ordinary language that refers to reality devolves into ideology. Fidelius goes further than Havel, who merely noticed this language and listed its differences from "ordinary" language. Additionally, Fidelius analyzes some characteristic features of totalitarian power in its self-reflection, as it was revealed through language. Language plays here an interesting role, deceiving the ones who use it, revealing the totalitarian character of their thinking. While Fidelius and Havel attempted to deconstruct and demystify totalitarian language, albeit in different ways, Fidelius through rhetorical and informal logical analysis and Havel by using the phenomenological tools he received from Husserl through Patočka, Rorty appears to be the intellectual heir to the tradition of totalitarian language, attempting to obfuscate its distinction from ordinary language, in effect apologizing for totalitarianism of the left.

## NOTES

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6. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 176.

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14. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 132–33.

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30. Fidelius, *Řeč komunistické moci*, 13.
31. Fidelius, *Řeč komunistické moci*, 21.
32. Fidelius, *Řeč komunistické moci*, 36.
33. John Eric Nolt, *Informal Logic, Possible Worlds and Imagination* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1984), 257ff.
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# 6

# Philosophy and Martyrdom: The Case of Jan Patočka

*Costica Bradatan*

> It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves.
>
> —Pier Paolo Pasolini

Philosophers sometimes need something stronger than words to express themselves. In such cases, their words and arguments no longer convince anyone and their rhetorical tricks only betray their impotence. If these philosophers are not to remain completely voiceless, they must resort to some nonverbal or transverbal means of expression.

When words irremediably fail and any rhetoric only embarrasses itself, philosophers are nevertheless left with a very effective tool, namely, their own lives—their own bodies. True, this would necessarily be their last trick, but, if used properly, it can prove a most powerful one. Socrates' death was the most effective means of persuasion he ever used, and over the centuries he has come to be revered not so much for what he did while he was alive, but for the way in which he died. Of all the books he (never) wrote in his lifetime, Socrates' death is definitely his bestseller—a philosophical masterpiece.

The philosophers' resort to their own (dying) bodies as a means of persuasion might be called "philosophy as an art of dying." Jan Patočka (1907–1977) was one of the most prominent practitioners of this rare art in the twentieth century, and this chapter is dedicated to placing him in the Socratic tradition of dying for an idea. However, before discussing Patočka's unique place in the tradition of philosophy as an "art of dying," I will first have to make a historical detour and pay closer attention to what exactly initiated this tradition, that is, to Socrates' understanding of—and his personal bravery in front of—death as presented by Plato in his *Apology*.

Then, once I have presented Socrates' case in some detail, I will propose a look at Patočka's political involvement and eventually death precisely from a Socratic angle. Finally, the concluding part of my discussion will advance some broader considerations on the significance of martyrdom in the Western philosophy.

## TAMING DEATH

In Plato's *Apology* the words "death," "dying," or "fear of death" appear relatively late in the body of the text (starting at 28b, with the *Apology* ranging from 17 to 42). They emerge timidly in the first speech Socrates delivered in front of the jury. Yet, once they have made their appearance, these words are used with increased frequency, which betrays the growing uneasiness of Socrates' state of mind. He keeps reassuring his audience—but especially himself—that there is absolutely no reason to be afraid of death. We should not be afraid of death because, according to him, to be afraid of death is just "another form of thinking that one is wise when one is not; it is to think that one knows when one does not know."[1] About death we do not, and cannot, have any positive knowledge; therefore we cannot, and should not, be afraid of it. To be afraid of something, one has first to know what that something is. As Socrates will show later in the *Apology*, whatever death might be, it is *absolutely* nothing to be afraid of

> Death is one of two things. Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything, or . . . it is really a change—a migration of the soul from this place to another. Now if there is no consciousness but only a dreamless sleep, death must be a marvelous gain. . . . If on the other hand death is a removal from here to some other place, and if what we are told is true, that all the dead are there, what greater blessing could there be than this? (40c–d)

Socrates might be right. Death might be indeed the greatest blessing one can ever have access to, or at least some never-ending dreamless sleep. Yet, in a sense, the whole problem arises precisely from this uncertainty about *what death is*. Either of the two possibilities indicated by Socrates would be equally acceptable, but we do not know for sure *which one* is actually the case. For Socrates the intellectualist, for the Socrates who held that people do evil only out of ignorance, and that if they knew what the good is, this knowledge would make them almost automatically virtuous—for this Socrates, who equated knowledge with virtue and happiness, not knowing what death is must have been a very painful realization. Death is *either* that *or* that: to the lover of clear-cut conceptual distinctions and perfectly matching definitions that Socrates was, this fundamental ambiguity of death, its dark conceptual nature, eternally defying our understanding, must have

given rise to a sense of ultimate philosophical humiliation; it must have been a source of endless anguish and terror.

To put it differently, to the question "Was Socrates afraid of death at these moments?" one reasonable answer is: "Of course, he was." He must have been. He was seventy; he had already lived a long life, long enough to understand many things. Life is a highly addictive drug: the longer one has lived, the more dependent on living one is. It is easier, if tragic, to die when one is young, than when one is old. This is why martyrdom comes in most cases from youth and from a soul that has not yet become too deeply attached to this world. When one is twenty or even thirty years old one makes a better martyr: one has not had enough time to understand what life really is; by this age one does not by necessity fully know what one leaves behind and what lies ahead.[2] But when you are seventy, you must certainly be afraid of dying. By the age of seventy, one has grown deep enough into the world and the world has grown deep into one; any separation cannot but be extremely painful. So Socrates (and, in his footsteps—caught up in a similar situation—Jan Patočka) had good reasons for being afraid of dying.

A heroic Socrates, a Socrates who had never—not for one second—felt any fear of death would be certainly glorious. This would be a quasi-divine Socrates, one beyond the constraints and limitations of the flesh. But a Socrates who had to make efforts to overcome his fear of death, who had to find his courage in the depths of his fear, is even more glorious. Opposed as they are, courage and fear are not unrelated. As it happens, sometimes extreme heroism is born precisely out of extreme anguish, and the most admirable courage out of the biggest fear. In *Disturbing the Peace*, Václav Havel makes a revealing confession about this dialectical process through which courage and heroism are born, frankly admitting that his own "alleged courage and stamina spring from fear." That is, from fear of his own conscience, which "delights in tormenting me for real and imaginary failures." He disarmingly confesses that all his "heroic time in prison" was "one long chain of worries, fears, and terrors." As he recalls:

> I was a frightened, terrified child, confusedly present on this earth, afraid of life, and eternally doubting the rightness of his place in the order of things; I probably bore prison worse than most of those who admired me would. Whenever I heard the familiar shout in the hallways, "Havel!" I would panic. Once, after hearing my name yelled out like that, I jumped out of bed without thinking and cracked my skull on the window.[3]

The whole last part of Socrates' first speech (up to 36a) is a sophisticated approach to *taming* death and dying. Thanks to Plato's excellent narrative in the *Apology*, we witness here a Socrates who *is gradually approaching* death, in its multifarious condition (as a philosophical notion, as a source of anguish, as a not-so-remote occurrence, as an imminent encounter). We

witness a Socrates who is willy-nilly learning how to make new room for death in the intimacy of his being. Thus Socrates is familiarizing himself with the idea of dying, of embracing it; he is trying to "humanize" death, to gradually overcome his fear of it: "if I am what I claim to be, and you put me to death, you will harm yourselves more than me" (30c). "I would never submit wrongly to any authority through fear of death, but would refuse even at the cost of my life" (32a). In all these statements Socrates is simply *too* insistent on his not being afraid of death not to draw our attention to it. Someone who was not indeed afraid of dying would spend less time talking about death. But this very insistence has also a *performative* role: Socrates is not so much trying to convince us that he is not afraid of dying as he is persuading *himself*.

## A "KAMIKAZE" PHILOSOPHER?

One of the turning points in the *Apology* occurs of course when the first vote of the jury takes place and the majority of it considers Socrates guilty as charged. Socrates' disappointment in his fellow-Athenians must have been enormous. Even if this vote was only about establishing whether he was guilty or not, the sheer fact that most of the jury voted "guilty" was for him a clear indication that his civic-educational mission in the city of Athens had failed and, therefore, his life in this city had become meaningless. It must have been around that time that Socrates most likely realized that, under such circumstances, the best thing was for him to die. The jury's vote showed only that nothing of what he had said in the first speech convinced them that he was right and his accusers wrong. The Athenians were deaf to his arguments (or too tired of them), and all the brilliant rhetoric he had employed in his first speech had left them unmoved. It had become obvious to Socrates that neither reasoning nor rhetoric was the way to reach them. Between him and his fellow Athenians there was now a huge gap of misunderstanding and suspicion and he must have realized that no words or discourses could ever bridge this gap. The majority's vote convinced him that whatever arguments, however clever, he might add to what he had already said would never reach his fellow citizens' minds or hearts.

Socrates thus found himself with only one thing left: his own life. He had to make *the most of it*, to conduct himself in such a manner that his death would bring maximum symbolic profit. By means of his dying body he now had to "say" what he could not say with his whole mastery of the Greek language; he had to turn his own flesh into something most persuasive. Confronted with the deaf ears of the Athenians, it was pointless for him to make any more speeches: all he could do was to express himself by the

most radical means, namely, by the means of his own body, *letting it die* in a most spectacular manner, so that nobody could ignore or not "listen to" it. Since life is something one loses only once, knowing how to make losing it most "profitable" is a very delicate business; marketing one's own death is a truly "one-shot" exercise. One has to know very well what things can—but especially what things cannot—be done.

As such, with very limited means at his disposal, in the short period of time that was left to him, Socrates had to transform his death into something that—from his point of view—would serve his cause as brilliantly as possible. He was heading toward his own death anyway: all he had to do was to make sure that he would not miss the target and this unique event would bring him, then and there, but also posthumously, the maximum profit in terms of honor, self-overcoming, exemplarity, heroism.[4] It is not very different from the kamikaze's strategy. Socrates was now, one might metaphorically say, a kamikaze who had to make his death as *eloquent* as possible. Understanding that, being already seventy, sooner or later he would die anyway, and—more importantly—that asking for forgiveness (or for a lighter penalty) would cast an embarrassing shadow on his name and reputation, he decided that the right moment had come for him to die.

It was not even gambling; it was almost as simple as a basic math problem: balancing what his death would bring him now with what his remaining life might give him in the future, Socrates realized that the former was by far the more profitable solution. In Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates* he is even recorded as saying:

> If I should now grow older, I know that I must face the frailties of old age—to see and hear less well, to be slow to learn and to be more forgetful of what I've learned. And, should I perceive myself becoming worse and blame myself, how . . . would I still be able to live pleasantly?[5]

First of all, Socrates had to make sure that he would get the death penalty and nothing less than the death penalty. For he could have ended up in limbo, neither dead nor alive—exiled, for example—and having to face for the rest of his life the shame of having asked for forgiveness from the people he had chastised all his life; and dying sooner or later an inglorious (natural) death. The trick he used was a brilliant one. Once he had been found guilty, as is well known, his accusers were to propose a penalty (they proposed the death penalty) and, in his turn, Socrates had to come with a counterproposal. At this point, instead of proposing an alternative penalty (naturally, lighter than his accusers'), Socrates considered that, after a life like his, dedicated as it was to the moral and spiritual well-being of the

Athenians, what he really deserved was not a penalty, but some considerable reward. More specifically, he asked his fellow citizens to provide him with free maintenance for the rest of his life:

> Nothing could be more appropriate for such a person than free maintenance at the state's expense. He deserves it much more than any victor in the races at Olympia. . . . These people give you the semblance of success, but I give you the reality. . . . So if I am to suggest an appropriate penalty which is strictly in accordance with justice, I suggest free maintenance by the state. (36d–37a)

This was the safest way to get the death penalty and nothing less. Anything less would have spoiled all his endeavors. To make sure that there was absolutely no way out for him, in his final speeches Socrates exercised his irony even more sharply than before: "being convinced that I do no wrong to anybody, I can hardly be expected to wrong myself by asserting that I deserve something bad, or by proposing a corresponding penalty" (37b). There are no traces of self-censorship in his final speeches: having nothing to lose, Socrates is now at his boldest. What he is practicing might well be called "suicide rhetoric." Everything is told, nothing is concealed: "In a court of law, just as in warfare, neither I nor any other ought to use his wits to escape death by any means" (38e–39a) or "It is not a lack of arguments that has caused my condemnation, but a lack of effrontery and impudence, and the fact that I have refused to address you in the way which would give you most pleasure" (38d). Nothing would stop Socrates from frankly telling the Athenians what he thought of them. Not that he still hoped to teach them how to live their lives, but probably he took it as a way of rounding off his own life.

The Socratic strategy worked with excellent results. He got the death penalty and died a most glorious death. Since his death Socrates has been ranked "among the most glorious of heroes and the most holy of martyrs. He was to be compared continuously with the warrior Alexander, the citizen Cato, and the divine Jesus."[6] His way of dying has always been regarded as that kind of death that makes one's life most meaningful. It was to become the supreme model for all philosophical deaths, indeed, the archetypal philosophical death. Thanks to Socrates' form of death, philosophy understood as a "preparation for death" or as "practicing death" has become an essential feature of the Western philosophers' self-representation. Much of Montaigne cannot be understood without it. Later still, Voltaire would say about Socrates' death: "The death of this martyr was actually the apotheosis of philosophy," and Jacques Maritain saw it as "the most sublime death to which merely human wisdom can lead."[7] Finally, Jan Patočka pushed his admiration to Socrates so far that not only did he adopt some of Socrates' teachings, but he even imitated his death.

## (ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT) JAN PATOČKA'S LIFE

Jan Patočka died on March 13, 1977, in a Prague hospital, shortly after his seventieth birthday. (Socrates died at exactly the same age.) The cause of Patočka's death was a "massive brain hemorrhage suffered under police interrogation. Over the preceding two months, he had been interrogated repeatedly, the last interrogation lasting over eleven hours."[8] He was interrogated as one of the leaders (spokespersons) of the Charter 77 movement in which he had become involved during the preceding year. The sheer presence of his name on the signature list would have been already a politically significant gesture, but he did more than that: Patočka was among those who drafted the charter (even though the document was considered the collective work of all its signatories); he gathered new signatures, wrote various manifestoes in its support, and did everything in his power to promote it.

Václav Havel was among the initiators of this movement and, along with some other dissidents, was directly involved in inviting Patočka to join the charter. They felt from the very beginning that Jan Patočka, "better than anyone else, could impress upon the Charter a moral dimension."[9] In Patočka the charter would have found an uncontested moral leader, someone transcending partisan politics (either communist or otherwise), someone who had not been involved at all in the Czechoslovakian political life, but whom everybody respected, thus conferring upon the movement a certain sense of unity and direction. For the initiators of the Charter 77 it was crucial to frame this movement not as an independent (read: anticommunist) political movement (which, technically, would have put it in conflict with the existing legal system, according to which such movements were not allowed to exist), but as a human rights movement (which, technically, would have fallen under the protection of the International Covenants on Human Rights, to which Czechoslovakia had formally adhered and thus absorbed into its own legal system). In fact, in an effort to somehow preempt the authorities' punitive actions, the authors of the Charter 77, in the opening paragraph of the document, carefully delineate this legal situation and remind the authorities that Czechoslovakia had reconfirmed its adherence to the principles of the Covenants in Helsinki in 1975, "which acquired validity here on 23 march 1976." From that day on "our citizens have the right, and our State the duty, to be guided" by the principles of these Covenants.[10] Not that such a reminder would guarantee them any real protection against police harassment, abusive arrest or imprisonment, but this was for the Chartists a way of telling the authorities that they knew they had rights.

In this context, getting Patočka onboard was seen as a way of consolidating the movement, and making it both morally attractive for the uncommitted

citizens and more difficult to break, when it would come to the regime's reaction to it.

One is tempted to see a certain parallelism between Patočka's relationship with the younger Charter 77 fellow members and that of Socrates with the youth of Athens whom he was "corrupting": in both cases, from the point of view of the system, what the philosopher does is "corrupt" the inexperienced and politically innocent people. The authorities framed these people's behavior, quite conveniently, as "subversive" and dangerous to the stability of the state. In both cases, this is more than sufficient for the system to make a case for getting rid of such annoyance. Ironically, however, in Patočka's case it was the youth who "corrupted" him, rather than the other way around. In *Disturbing the Peace*, Havel speaks about how he, along with other young Chartists, approached Patočka with an invitation to join the movement. There was something deeply apolitical about Patočka. He "had never before been directly involved in politics, and he'd never had any direct, sharp confrontation with the powers that be. In such matters he was reluctant, shy, and reserved." He must have learned from Socrates—just as any reasonable philosopher should—that the one who is seeking justice, "if he intends to survive even for a short time, must necessarily confine himself to private life and leave politics alone" (32a). This is why his strategy vis-à-vis official politics was a strategy of resistance; it was, in Havel's own words, very much like "the strategy of trench warfare": he tried "to hold out as long as he could without compromise, but he never went on the attack himself. He was utterly dedicated to philosophy and teaching, and he never modified his opinions, but he did try to avoid things that might have put an end to his work."[11]

It might well be the case that Patočka simply postponed his involvement in dissident activities because he always knew that if he would get involved in it he could not do it otherwise than totally, without reservation, without any safety nets ("completely, leaving himself no emergency exits, with the same perseverance he devoted to philosophizing," in Havel's words); in other words, accepting all the consequences of his decision and ready to die for his ideas. But "ready to die" is a radical situation a philosopher can find himself in, something quite out of the ordinary order of things. Before one is ready to die (if ever), this notion must grow in one until it reaches a certain natural maturation, however long this process might take.

Moreover, there is something else that, for a while at least, must have made it difficult for Patočka to dedicate himself fully to such a deadly business as dissidence. This difficulty arose from a certain dimension of his philosophy and probably also from his own personality. There is a distinct sense in which Patočka's philosophy can be seen as a continual celebration of life, of the process of living—a hymn to life and to the world of living. Deeply rooted in the phenomenological tradition where life, body,

embodiment, *Lebenswelt*, "lived experience" are central, much of Patočka's philosophizing is dedicated to a detailed phenomenological analysis of such notions as acceptance, "sinking roots," earth, home, care, and other related notions.[12] His philosophy is permeated by a deep sense of attachment to, and engagement with, the fundamental unity of everything that is alive, to everything that breathes, that is born, gives birth and lives. Reminiscent somehow of Aristotle's philosophy, Patočka's writings betray a distinct metaphysical sensibility toward the biological, toward the cosmic chain of life, the warmth of living organisms, the infinite processes of birth, growth, change and decay. There is a sense of cosmic *sympathy* in Patočka's philosophy: he does not so much *think* the world out as *feel* it. Patočka's philosophy is a *caring* philosophy. For him, treating the body as simply an object of the outside world would be not only an error of thought but also a form of *injustice* to the body itself. In the footsteps of Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists, Patočka sees the body not as that which we think *about*, but as present *in* the very process of thinking, as that which makes any thinking possible. In the lectures published as *Body, Community, Language, World* Patočka writes: "That *living* body is the presupposition of our even being aware of an anatomical and a physiological body. Such subjective body is no mere reflection of the objective body. It is subjective, but it is also objective in the sense of being a necessary condition of life, of lived experience."[13] Maybe "mystical" would be too strong a word to describe the exact nature of Patočka's attitude to the world of living, but it would not be completely inappropriate either. We live in this world as embodied beings, inhabiting the earth, and in the process we come to develop a special relationship to that which is under our feet. Thus Patočka sketches a fascinating earth-centered philosophy:

> As moving beings, we are drawn to something that is motionless, that is eternally the unshakeable ground—the earth. The earth is the referent of bodily movement as such, as that which is not in motion, which is firm. At the same time we experience the earth as a power . . . something that has no counterpart in our lived experience. It is a power also as the earth that feeds us, something that penetrates us globally. By our nature, by the structuring of our life, we are *earthlings*. The corporeity of what we strive for in our life testifies to the power of the earth in us.[14]

Patočka sees the human condition as essentially one of "self-movement,"[15] and he distinguishes "three movements of human life": a movement of "self-anchoring,"[16] a movement of "self-sustenance" (or "self-projection"),[17] and a third movement of superior (specifically human) existence.[18] The first of these movements is the most relevant for a discussion of Patočka's attachment to the world of life. In this movement, we desperately seek a home, some warm corner of the universe where life is not threatened: "The acceptance of the

newborn into human warmth compensates for the separation of the body, for bodily individuation."[19] With impressive poetical force, reminiscent of Heidegger (whose disciple he was, in fact), Patočka talks extensively of our primordial need for a home so as to put down roots in the world. In his essay "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology" he describes a home as

> a place where the sinking of roots among things takes place, that is, where needs are met, through the mediation of others. What is needed, though, must be *procured*, secured, and that takes place only partially in the home—the activity of procuring what is needed, work, entails an outside, the work place, the domain of objectivity.[20]

At this initial stage, we relate to the world around, we approach it and seek to understand it, in the terms dictated by the ontology of dwelling: home, shelter, homelessness, alien/familiar, acceptance/rejection. Thus, the issue of hospitality, of the other's openness toward us, emerges, which places Patočka in the context of a series of recent discussions in Continental philosophy, especially those associated with Jacques Derrida, as suggested in the following passage from the same essay:[21]

> The entire world can be a mother's lap, can be a worm, cordial, smiling, and protective glass globe, or there may be in it the cosmic cold with its deadening, icy breath—and both are closely linked to whether in the world and out of the world someone smiles at us and meets us responsively.[22]

Life, human life, is possible only within this space of openness, where people when come across each other smile to one another. Smiling is for Patočka an indication that life has become possible: a smile brings about the possibility of life. In the luckier parts of the world the praise that Patočka brings to the "smiling face" of others, to the world as a warm and welcoming place, might not be conveying anything beyond a worn-out truism, but to an East European or Russian ear, such a praise is hard to overevaluate. It carries with it a profound, immemorial wisdom:

> The possibility of life is the possibility of this warmth, of this reciprocal smile, of this prevenient acceptance under protection which is simultaneously a placing of our own being into the hands of another. . . . That means that life is only possible as *already* entering a prepared warmth, in the passivity of being penetrated by the state of *acceptance*, and so only on the basis of a past that lets us lower an anchor, sink roots.[23]

This whole discussion of "sinking roots," home and acceptance betrays, I think, on Jan Patočka's part, a sense of (a comfortable enough) insertion into the world, a successful adaptation to the rhythms of living: to be able to say, as he does in *Body, Community, Language*, that "by our nature, by the

structuring of our life, we are *earthlings*. The corporeity of what we strive for in our life testifies to the power of the earth in us"[24] means to have become somehow enchanted by the earthly condition and to have enjoyed a deep sense of symbiosis with it. In other words, Patočka must have come to feel quite well ("at home") in this world and found it easy enough to connect to it, to its objects, to its functions and working patters.

It can thus be safely said that by the time Patočka reached Socrates' age, the time of his involvement in Charter 77, he had grown deep into the world and the world had grown deep into him: his extraction from it could not be other than extremely painful. As he himself said, the "instinctual affective bonding is the basis of safety, of vital warmth."[25] He shared this vital warmth with his neighbors, with his pupils, with everybody he knew. His disciples and friends testify to his warm and charming personality. Ironically enough, he could not help showing this friendliness even to those whose job was to upset him: he seemed to have been on friendly terms even with the Secret Police agents who were tailing him. There is a report—which *se non è vero è ben trovato*—that mentions the alleged devastation of a retired Secret Police officer at Patočka's funeral who "identified with Patočka so strongly that he forced himself into an acquaintance of sorts with the professor and wanted to speak a few words over his grave."[26] As it were, the whole world, including Patočka's secret agent, must have grown deep into Patočka, and Patočka must have grown equally deep into it. Through Patočka's extraction from the world something in the world died too.

## DEATH AND THE "CARE FOR THE SOUL"

Yet, "sinking roots," immersion into the "vital warmth" of the world of living is only a "first movement," only one of the stages a person has to go through to become properly human. Living at this biological stage means taking part not only in the positivity of life (birth, growth, flourishing), but also in its opposite: decay, corruption, degeneration, and death. To be fully human, one has always to "overcome" this first stage. No matter how fascinated by the world of living he must have been, for Patočka there was also something fundamentally precarious about human life. In *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* he describes human life as "a life perennially threatened, dedicated to death, and devoted to work—that is, to unceasingly turning back this threat which in the end is always victorious."[27] At its most basic, life is always projected against a "dark background" of death, destruction and nothingness. Human beings come into life

> not only conceived by and born of those who live, but also accepted by them and dependent on their care, and they leave life equally dependent on those

> whom they had themselves accepted. In this dependence we stand not only in the context of the world of life which is subject to the bondage of work, but rather life . . . is itself a part of the dark landscape of the world to which the gods, too, had access when they sent death into the world and enslaved humans to life and toil.[28]

Human life is a life lived in the shadow of death. No matter how far one goes, one will never go far enough to escape it. Following in Heidegger's footsteps, Patočka saw death—the prospect of dying—as part and parcel of life, as structuring in a fundamental way our *Dasein*. And there is only one way to overcome this fundamental ontological precariousness—simply to look death in the face. Heidegger would say that looking death in the face gives us a chance to live authentically. Patočka elaborates on Plato's Allegory of the Cave and considers that the Platonic philosopher could overcome death precisely "by not fleeing from it but by facing up to it." The philosophy of the one who escapes the cave is *meletē thanatou* (preparation for death), which Patočka, interestingly, translates as "care for death." Moreover, he adds that "care for the soul is inseparable from care for death which becomes the true care for life; life (eternal) is born of this direct look at death, of an overcoming of death."[29]

"Care for the soul" is famously one of the fundamental concepts in Patočka's philosophy. He deals with it in several of his works, but his published series of lectures *Plato and Europe* is of special interest for my purpose, because here he posits it at the very foundation of the European mind. European philosophy is, for him, simply inconceivable in the absence of this care for the soul. Thanks to it, we have a good means of overcoming our mortality and our instinctive fear of death. Care of the soul is what makes whatever is properly human in us possible: morality, thought, culture, history. It is the most sacred thing in us, something through which we become connected to that which is eternal, yet without having to leave this world: it is "the attempt to embody what is eternal within time, and within one's own being, and at the same time, an effort to stand firm in the storm of time, stand firm in all dangers carried with it." Care of the soul is what confers upon the soul a clear sense of order, self-consistency and inner beauty. Only through it

> does the soul become what it can be—harmonious, not in contradiction, no longer running the risk of shattering into contradictory pieces, thus finally joining something that endures, that is solid. This is the basis of our acting morally, and this is also the foundation of thought, for only thinking that shows what is solid, stable, shows what is.

For Patočka, a soul that indeed cares for itself does not float aimlessly at the surface of things, but approaches them in a disciplined and right fashion.

A self-caring soul does not do any injustice to things; it treats them as what they really are. Moreover, this epistemic correctness that a self-caring soul displays outwardly is only the reflection of an inner order and of an inner life dedicated to rigorous thinking:

> The care of the soul is the internal forming of the soul itself, forming into something unyieldingly solid, into existence in this sense, because of the very fact that it is occupied with thinking. And it is a precise thinking, a bounded, limited one. For that reason the soul gets a certain form, it does not become dispersed.[30]

Yet, all this preoccupation with the inner life of the soul should not give the impression that care for the soul is something individualistic or asocial. On the contrary, care for the soul has in Patočka an essentially social dimension: the "proper place of the care for the soul" is the *polis*, which is also "the proper place of history."[31] In fact, the life of the soul is inconceivable outside the life of the community within which that soul finds itself. Even at its most basic level (at the stage of "sinking roots"), life is already "living together," made possible by *others*' acceptance of one's presence in the warmth of their world. Then, when it comes to this higher stage, a soul that cares for itself and wants to "live in truth" *has* to do whatever it takes to help its fellow-souls understand what it means to care for the soul. Care for the soul presupposes, in an essential way, this generous openness to the others and an active *care for them*. Moreover, if it is not to betray itself, a self-caring soul has to do it *at any price*. The best example is, again, Socrates. Patočka repeatedly praises Socrates for having fully understood what care for the soul is, and for having been the first Western philosopher to put it above anything else, including his own life. Socrates, according to Patočka, constantly "invites people to *think*, that they think like him, that they search, that everyone *responsively* examine their every thought," every belief, every established opinion. He teaches his fellow Athenians that "an unexamined life is not worth living," even though sometimes this process of examination places the examiner against his city. In the end, thanks to these teachings, to this active care for the soul, Socrates' "whole *existence*" becomes "a provocation to the city," turning him into a public enemy of sorts.

On the other hand, Patočka argues that by persecuting Socrates the city of Athens does only what is natural for a "lawless city" to do. In a way, ironically, Socrates *invited* them to engage with him: his way of philosophizing was always an invitation to an open confrontation. This is one of those cases in which the care for the soul endangers the very individual practicing it: "the care of the soul in a lawless city endangers a human being, it endangers the kind of being that stands for the care of the soul, just as that being endangers the city. And it is altogether logical that the city then treats

it accordingly." It is not difficult to see that in passages like these Patočka speaks not only of Socrates and the city of Athens, but also of himself and the Czechoslovakia of his time. As such, when saying that "it is altogether logical" that the city treats he who pursues care for the soul "accordingly," Patočka in fact sends an oblique message that he, too, is prepared to die for the sake of a Socratic way of life. He goes as far as to frame his philosophical mission in terms of a duty to honor the "Socratic heritage":

> Socrates leaves a heritage. Socrates did not help himself, but he helps others. In what way can a philosopher who is in such dire straits help others? In a philosophical way, through the outline of a city, where the *philosopher can live*, where the man who is to care for the soul can live, the man who is to carry out the philosophical thought. . . . To create such a city is the work of his successors. That is the city where Socrates and those like him will not need to die.[32]

As Erazim Kohák plastically puts it, the story of "Patočka's philosophizing, which began with the Socratic question, finds its Socratic conclusion in the interrogation rooms of the police headquarters."[33]

## EMBODYING PHILOSOPHY

There must have been a moment in Jan Patočka's life when he realized that his scholarly articles, his underground lectures and seminars, however bold they were in terms of (subversive) content and however important in terms of *Bildung*, were not enough to make a difference in the real world. He must have realized that, however subtle, profound and authentic, his philosophical speculations could not, by themselves alone, amount to the active (to the point of self-sacrificial) care for the soul that he praised so much in Socrates. Something was still missing. In order not to betray his own ideas, he had to *do* something else. In his own words: "Philosophy reaches a point where it no longer suffices to pose questions and answer them, both with extreme energy; where the philosopher will progress no further unless he manages to make a decision."[34] What was missing was a *test* of his philosophy and what he had to do was a *gesture* that would put his ideas to test. In other words, became increasingly aware that a moment would come when he would "have to put his thinking to the test in action. . . . that he couldn't avoid it or put it off forever, because ultimately this would call his whole philosophy into doubt."[35]

This crucial step was taken in 1976 when Patočka decided to become actively involved in the Charter 77 movement. To be sure, as scholars have noticed, when he decided to take this step, he knew exactly what he was doing: he was following in Socrates' footsteps.[36] Consequently drastic persecution was only a matter of time. "When Patočka signed Charter 77, agreed to serve as a spokesperson, and authored documents for it, it was an invita-

tion to Husák's regime to persecute him."[37] Seen from outside, his decision might appear just as a "political" decision. What can be more political than a philosopher opposing a totalitarian regime? At a deeper level, however, his decision was of a philosophical nature: Patočka's reasons to join the charter had not much to do with the logic of politics (even if this was to have political implications),[38] but they had something essential to do with the type of philosophy he had been teaching and practicing throughout his life. It is a type of philosophy that requires a deep existential commitment on the philosopher's side: lack of such a commitment may well end up invalidating its most important premises. Had Patočka not made this gesture, he could never have said that his philosophy "worked." If a philosophy cannot do anything to stop barbarity, then it doesn't have a right to say anything against it.[39] Jan Patočka's involvement in the Charter 77 movement should therefore be seen as a *continuation*, or culmination, of statements and principles of his philosophical theories. As Aviezer Tucker writes, "Patočka's metaphysically founded ethical system fully explains his involvement with Charter 77."[40] Just as Socrates *had* to say what he did in the court so as not to betray the very essence of his philosophizing, so Patočka *had* to get involved in the Charter 77 (and subsequently pay for it with his own life) in order to prove—to himself, to his disciples, to everybody—that his teaching were worth following and listening to. The ethical commitment of the philosopher is, in both cases, something stemming from their own philosophy. Patočka thus becomes, in Paul Ricoeur's words, "the most Socratic of modern philosophers."[41]

In a text written while in prison, immediately after Patočka's death, Havel vividly recalls their last conversion. It took place during

> the last break between interrogations in the Ruzyně Prison waiting room for "interogees" philosophizing. At any moment they could come for any one of us, but that did not matter to the professor; in his impromptu seminar on the history of the notion of human immortality and human responsibility he weighed his words as carefully as if we had unlimited time at our disposal. Not only did I ask questions, I even presented him with some of my own philosophical ideas (a thing quite unthinkable before), and he, it seemed to me, was animated by the fact that he found me more than just a polite listener.[42]

What is truly remarkable about this conversation, as Havel recalls it, is its striking similarity with Plato's *Phaedo*. In essence, both texts tell the same story: in a prison room, shortly before his death, a philosopher is teaching his disciple(s), for the last time, about the immortality of the soul, and about what life is ultimately about. The imminence of death does not in the least affect the two philosophers: their talk is just like it used to be, their speech is the same; there is nothing rushed, nervous, in their utterances;

they both speak as if they had all the time in the world. The fact that the conversation takes place in a prison—moreover, that it is going to be followed shortly by their death—does not affect at all the substance of what they have to say. On the contrary, precisely by their serenity they *show* that what they are *saying* about death, dying, life, and immortality, is true. The serenity they display in the proximity of death is precisely what validates their talk. In both cases, their teaching is supremely moving and efficient, like never before. Reading *Phaedo* we feel the disciples' *attentiveness* to their master, the silent transformation that is taking place in them. As for Havel, this was the lesson of his life: this "had been the encounter that more than any previous one had evoked in me the desire to see him more often. . . . I finally realized all I still wanted to tell him and all I still wanted to learn from him; and on top of all else, our topic: why, we had been talking about death!"[43]

Later on in the same text Havel talks about those "people who spend their whole lives thinking about death," and suggests that in a sense these people could be said to "outwit" death. They are somehow stronger than death itself, because what they have done when they were alive *remains*; what they have done death cannot "undo." Within the grand scheme of things, they overcome their own deaths and continue to have enduring effects on other people's lives. After all, Havel continues,

> that which has already happened, which once was, cannot be undone, "unconsidered"; it in a certain sense *is*—here—there—somewhere—and no cerebral stroke can change any of it. And it seems to me that those like Professor Patočka, with all they were, thought out, did, somehow keep being—here—there—somewhere—more *urgently* than the many of whom death has nothing to fear, and thus no reason to rush.[44]

Havel is right, what these people do, death cannot take away: it remains. Death only makes it stronger, more visible; in a certain sense, even more effective. The death of these people is not an end, but only a beginning. Ironically, the Communist authorities, the secret police in particular, were the first to feel this effectiveness. They felt it right after Patočka's death: at his funeral. Impressive police forces were deployed to flank—and, certainly, intimidate—those attending the funeral. By their sheer presence there, police recognized that Patočka's death had an important political dimension, and that his dead body carried a living message. It may be said that the secret police realized that their victory over Patočka had been a rather precarious one, and that, in an uncanny way, a dead Patočka was stronger, more influential, and—for them—more dangerous than the living Patočka, the one they used to tail and always keep an eye on. They had all the power in the world and managed to turn him into a corpse; now, mysteriously, the corpse defeated them. And they did everything in their power to prevent

Patočka from embarking on a posthumous political life: "Police cameras filmed and photographed everybody, even at the graveside. The service was interrupted, and the priest's funeral oration drowned out, by a military helicopter circling overhead and the heavy revving of police motorcycles at a nearby racetrack."[45] It thus happens that the death of some people make them much stronger and more threatening than when they were alive. While they were still alive they were vulnerable; they could be threatened, scared, beaten; now that they are dead they don't have anything to lose, they can do anything. The same thing had happened with Jan Palach's corpse a few years before: the authorities "ordered the tortured body to be removed from the original grave, cremated, and the urn deposited in a secret location outside Prague, yet people still keep coming to the spot with candles and flowers."[46] The harder they tried to get rid of Palach's corpse, the stronger and more politically active it became.

## THEY SHOOT PHILOSOPHERS, DON'T THEY?

Socrates and Patočka are only the first and, respectively, the most recent in a long series of philosophers who, in some way or other, paid with their own lives for what they thought: Hypatia, Thomas More, Giordano Bruno, Edith Stein, and others. There is always something fascinating about these figures: at some point in their lives they stopped using words for conveying their message and started using their own bodies, their own flesh. As Merleau-Ponty said, the "use a man is to make of his body is transcendent in relation to that body as a mere biological entity."[47] Not only did these philosophers transcend their bodies but they turned them into most eloquent texts, as it were, into some extension of the body of their written work. They died expressive and violent deaths which were immediately perceived by others as the ultimate accomplishment of their work, its crowning achievement.[48] Their deaths were deaths unlike any others because they were plastic gestures, not some annihilating occurrence, but something positive, meaningful. Their deaths enriched and conferred a deeper meaning on the lives they had lived: "The deaths of Socrates, Lincoln, Patočka, and Rabin are usually interpreted as *sacrifices* for that which gave *meaning* to their lives. It is possible to interpret their act of dying as the ultimate self-consciousness of their meanings that transcend their lives."[49] And probably not only on the lives they had lived, but also on the things they had said while they were alive, on the ideas and doctrines they had taught. Most of these figures, because of their spectacular death, have retroactively become "founders" of various philosophical traditions: their sacrifice functions as a "founding murder," to use René Girard's

terminology. Socrates is almost universally venerated as the founder of the European philosophical tradition, or at least of a certain facet of it; Bruno as having laid the foundations of modern free-thinking; Patočka as having delivered a new civic culture in Eastern Europe.

There seems to be a double movement here. On the one hand, communities try to get rid of what bothers them too much, sacrificing one or more of their members for the comfort and mental security of the many. They "produce" these martyrs insofar as they do not tolerate certain ideas, beliefs, or behaviors. On the other hand, as in the cases of Socrates and Patočka, the philosophers themselves see death as a crowning event of their lives, without which their work would be something incomplete, if not utterly compromised. Their own death serves as an important argument—*the* argument—of their work: its spectacular occurrence becomes not only a structural part of their lives but adds essential meaning to their work.[50]

In a short essay, entitled "Observations on the Sequence Shot," which is particularly pertinent to this discussion of "philosophical death," Pier Paolo Pasolini argues that, as long as we are alive we remain fatally "unexpressed," there is still something important in us that we have no knowledge of—nor anybody else, for that matter: "Until I die no one can guarantee to really know me, that is, to be able to give a meaning to my action."[51] Up to the moment of our death we remain an enigma—especially to ourselves. Only in death do we have the key to the very meaning of our lives:

> It is . . . absolutely necessary to die, *because, as long as we live, we have no meaning*, and the language of our lives . . . is untranslatable; a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. *Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives*. . . . *It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves*.[52]

Socrates was never Socrates—in the fullest sense of the word—until he died. His "Socratic" death made him truly who he was. And neither was Patočka, Patočka, in the proper sense of the word, before he died. What made them exemplary was that they knew that to become who they were, they had to teach themselves the art of dying.

## NOTES

Under the title "Philosophy as an Art of Dying," an earlier version of this chapter appeared in *The European Legacy* 12, no. 5 (September 2007), 589–605. Published with the permission from the Taylor & Francis Group (www.informaworld.com).

1. Plato, *Apology*, trans. H. Tredennick, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 29a–b; subsequent references are cited in the text.

2. Not to speak of the fascination that dying young sometimes produces. Peter France discusses "the Romantic scheme of things" where "an early tragic death is read as a mark of election." Peter France, "An Etna among Foothills: The Death of *Mayakovsky*," in *Dying Words: The Last Moments of Writers and Philosophers*, ed. Martin Crowley (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 11.

3. Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvížd'ala*, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 204–5.

4. Nietzsche: "The *dying Socrates* became the new ideal, never seen before, of noble Greek youths." Cited in Peter Ahrensdorf, *The Death of Socrates and the Life of Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's* Phaedo (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 2.

5. Xenophon, "Apology of Socrates," in *The Trial and Execution of Socrates: Sources and Controversies*, ed. Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 82–83.

6. Ahrensdorf, *Death of Socrates*, 22.

7. Ahrensdorf, *Death of Socrates*, 2, 1, respectively.

8. Erazim Kohak, *Jan Patočka*: *Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3.

9. Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, 135.

10. Edward Lawson, *Encyclopedia of Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2004), 341–42.

11. Lawson, *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*.

12. According to Patočka philosophy must be phenomenological "not in the embarrassingly petty sense of departmental partisan warfare but in the universal sense of retaining the vision of experience as meaningful even in the absence of a God to act as the provider and guarantor of meaning." Kohak, *Jan Patočka*, 132.

13. Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, trans. Erazim Kohak, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 3. See also Merleau-Ponty's similar reflections on the body. For example: "I cannot take it [the body] to pieces and reform it to make a clear idea. Its unity is always implicit and vague. It is always other than what it is, always sexuality and at the same time freedom, rooted in nature at the very moment when it is transformed by cultural influences, never hermetically sealed and never left behind. Whether it is a question of another's body or my own, I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up on my own account the drama which is being played out in it, and losing myself in it. I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience, and yet at the same time my body is as it were a 'natural' object." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Alden L. Fisher (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 212.

14. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 149.

15. "The movement of *self-anchoring, of self-loss in self-sustenance and of self-finding in self-surrender*. This movement is a movement in the most primordial, strongest sense of the word; each of *our* physical movements is in reality a part of

this all-embracing overall movement that we are. . . . Our birth is a movement, our acceptance, our encounter with things in perceptions, our instinctive reactions, our self-reproduction in dependence on others as well as in our own achievements, in work." Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology," in Kohak, *Jan Patočka*, 269.

16. The "movement of sinking roots, of anchoring—an instinctive-affective movement of our existence." Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 148.

17. The "movement of self-sustenance, of self-projection—the movement of our coming to terms with the reality we handle, a movement carried out in the region of human work." Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 148.

18. The "movement of existence in the narrower sense of the word which typically seeks to bestow a global closure and meaning on the regions and rhythms of the first and second movement." Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 148.

19. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 149.

20. Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology," in Kohak, *Jan Patočka*, 260.

21. Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Ann Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

22. Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology," 264.

23. Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology," 264.

24. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 149.

25. Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 157.

26. Eda Kriseová, *Václav Havel*, trans. Caleb Crain (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), 131.

27. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohak, ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 17.

28. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 22.

29. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 105.

30. Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, trans. Petr Lom (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 87, 86.

31. Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 103.

32. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 85, 87, 88.

33. Kohak, *Jan Patočka*, 8.

34. Cited in Kriseová, *Václav Havel*, 108.

35. Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, 135.

36. "Patočka accepted that the struggle between himself and the Czechoslovakian tyranny would end as Socrates' struggle with Athens did. He accepted that his very practice of care for the soul, of search for the truth, would constitute a provocation and might result in state aggression against care for the soul, against the practice of being human." Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of the Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 53.

37. Tucker, *Philosophy and Politics*, 86.

38. "In a case of life-imitating philosophy, Patočka, also like Socrates, eventually came to a collision with the authorities and lost his life in the process. Withdrawing from 'political' life (conventionally understood under authoritarian communism) and devoting himself to philosophical inquiry did not prevent Patočka from taking a political position, one perceived as fundamentally destabilizing to the political

order." Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 246.

39. Fanynka Sokolová, Patočka's daughter, recounts in her memorial volume shortly before his death: "You were not well; you were lying down. You were speaking about the lives of philosophers. . . . Then suddenly you said, 'You know, when William of Orange had that Spaniard murdered . . . no one said anything. And Spinoza . . . went and wrote on his door: *Ultimi barbarorum*." Cited in Kriseová, *Václav Havel*, 130.

40. Tucker, *Philosophy and Politics*, 43. See Barbara Falk, *Dilemmas of Dissidence*, 246: "Signing the Charter was an extension of what Patočka had always been doing, whether as a student of Husserl, a clerk in the Comenius archive, or as a lecturer of an underground seminar. Like Socrates, his task was to actively 'do' philosophy, not face some forced and false choice between 'politics' and 'philosophy.' The point was not to engage in politics for its own sake, but to logically follow the Socratic dictates of attending to issues of truth and reason in the search for the Good."

41. Quoted in Kohak, *Jan Patočka*, 132.

42. Václav Havel, "Last Conversation," in *Good-bye, Samizdat: Twenty Years of Czechoslovak Underground Writing*, ed. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 213.

43. Havel, "Last Conversation," 213.

44. Havel, "Last Conversation," 214.

45. John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 253–54.

46. Eva Kantúrnová, "On the Ethics of Palach's Deed," in Goetz-Stankiewicz, *Good-bye, Samizdat*, 175.

47. Merleau-Ponty, *Essential Writings*, 202.

48. The image of Pasolini's dead body "displayed as an emblem of his life and work, as if it were itself a 'crowning' work of self-definition, stands in turn as emblematic of how representations of death scenes rechannel and make lives over." Robert Gordon, "'To Speak Oneself and Die': Pasolini and the Poet as a Martyr," in Crowley, *Dying Words*, 56–68, 60.

49. Tucker, *Philosophy and Politics*, 57.

50. Although suicide proper (and the philosophical significance thereof) is not the subject of the present essay, there are instances when suicide is intended and comes to be seen as a political gesture. I've already mentioned Jan Palach, who was not actually murdered by the regime, but committed "political suicide." Yuri Lotman sees the radical Russian philosopher Aleksandr Radishchev's suicide in 1802 in similar terms. See Iurii Lotman, "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture," in *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, ed. Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 86.

51. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett, ed. Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 236.

52. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 236–37. In his paper, Robert Gordon discusses Pasolini's death in relation to what Pasolini himself said about meaning-giving death. What happened after Pasolini's death in a strange way confirmed what while

alive he had imagined about his death. After his violent death, "began a process of mythologization that aspired to create this dead poet as a prophetic vessel of truth, Romantic solitude, and timeless totality of knowledge. The figure of Pasolini was undergoing a Dantesque reduction into meaning, not operated by angels or devils but by public or media appropriation, in this case often quite literally of the image of his crushed body." Gordon, "To Speak Oneself and Die," 60.

# 7

# Anticommunist Orientalism: Shifting Boundaries of Europe in Dissident Writing

*Natasa Kovacevic*

Some of the most forceful dissident critiques have charged communist regimes with enforcing a utopian politics out of touch with reality, with dangerous social and economic experimentation justified by the goal of putting utopian ideals of solidarity and egalitarianism into practice. Indisputably, such dissident philosophers and authors, their texts circulated in controversial *samizdat* issues, have critically influenced a number of popular anticommunist movements across Eastern Europe. If in exile, they sometimes acted as cultural "ambassadors" for their countries in the West. Their political and philosophical thought ultimately inspired popular endorsements of postcommunist transitions to democracy and the free market, in which the former dissident intellectuals sometimes gained real political power (for instance, Václav Havel).

But while some dissidents, such as the Budapest School and *Praxis* group philosophers discussed in Jeffrey Stevenson Murer's presentation,[1] offered immanent critiques of communist regimes by targeting their disregard of democracy, police brutality, and abuses of human rights, many have nevertheless participated in—and helped to strengthen—an Orientalist-type discursive tradition of imagining a communist, barbarian, and inferior Eastern Europe as a disciple of the progressive, modern, and democratic West.[2] In this essay I will focus on this latter type of critique in order to raise the question of anticommunist intellectuals' role in the little discussed Orientalization of Eastern European communist regimes within Cold War ideological discourses, especially the dissident exiles' contributions to Western attempts to understand, map, or geo-graph the communist "other."

Edward Said's term "Orientalism" is used here strategically, not to argue that Eastern Europe has suffered the type of Western colonial disenfranchisement,

exploitation, and racism that Said associates with the "Orient," but that Eastern European societies have been subjected to a structurally similar Orientalist discourse denoting a position of inferiority with respect to the West. Said's famous conceptual category has recently been appropriated and adjusted by Larry Wolff, Maria Todorova, Dusan Bjelic and Obrad Savic, Andrew Hammond, Roumiana Deltcheva, Milica Bakic-Hayden, and others for the discussion of Western political and cultural attitudes toward Eastern Europe.[3] If we insist that no Eastern European country ever suffered the type of colonialism typical of Asian or African locales, we may obfuscate a long history of Western attempts to identify itself as enlightened, developed, and civilized in distinction to Eastern Europe, and as a result, to intellectually master Eastern Europe through description and classification, fixing it into stereotypes of lamentable cultural, political, and economic "backwardness" (e.g., agrarian, old-fashioned, collectivist, totalitarian, obedient, abnormally violent, bloodthirsty).[4] Even if there is no tangible colonial tradition to speak of, "as in the case of Orientalism, so also with Eastern Europe, intellectual discovery and mastery could not be entirely separated from the possibility of real conquest."[5] I argue, therefore, that this "intellectual discovery and mastery" of Eastern Europe is always-already implicated in West-East political, economic, and cultural interactions which strengthen their asymmetrical relations of power.

Anticommunist dissident writing is interesting in so far as it overlaps with Western Cold War discourses that combine cultural racism with political and geographic hierarchies, associating democracy with the West, and communism/authoritarianism with the East.[6] Given some dissidents' investment in the entrenched Orientalist stereotypes of Eastern Europe and in indigenous attempts to overcome this discursive stigma, we should be alert to the ideological dimension of political narratives that helped to discredit communist politics and philosophy as *altogether* utopian, irrational, and immature in favor of (neo)liberal-democratic capitalism, which is supposedly realistic, responsible, and avoids extremes and social experimentation. This is particularly important in light of the political platforms which attempt to naturalize the often disastrous postcommunist transitions to market-economy civil societies as something normal and civilized: as "the only way."[7] From this perspective, it also becomes necessary to question the seeming neutrality of a binary opposition between Eastern "illiberal" and Western "liberal" values, employed by Vladimir Tismaneanu in his conference presentation, where Eastern illiberalism appears as some sort of self-contained, pathogenic product of "collectivistic passions," "tribal collectivism," "utopianism," while Western "liberalism" is endowed with an implicit positive valorization.[8] Not only are we dealing with constructed binary oppositions, but Eastern "illiberalism" cannot be considered outside of its often agonized relationship with the West, including attempts to over-

come the stigma of backwardness through confidence-raising national(ist) fantasies.

Returning to anticommunist intellectuals, I will examine a number of texts by Joseph Brodsky, Czesław Miłosz, and Milan Kundera to show how their employment of Orientalist stereotypes belies an anxiety to distance themselves from communist politics and to emancipate their homelands from the aforementioned stigma of cultural and political backwardness. Critical scholarship has largely focused on their poetic or fictional output—where the "real," unrestrained artistic innovation worthy of literary critical attention allegedly surfaces—somewhat neglecting, in turn, the vast and diverse body of their critical-philosophical essays, lectures, and open letters, which have nevertheless served as an important context for interpreting (and prompting interest in) their poetry or fiction. I would like to suggest that such neglect may be caused by a traditional categorization of this type of writing as itself critical and philosophical—rather than poetic or fictional—and that the fictional quality of Miłosz's, Brodsky's, and Kundera's prose is further obfuscated by its autobiographic dimension that claims it, however precariously, for "truth."

Of course, this is a problematic dichotomy, which I set out to challenge by critically dissecting the textuality of the dissident authors' "lived experience." I treat their autobiographical/philosophical writing as, in effect, the *writing of* Brodsky, Miłosz, or Kundera, without assigning primacy, chronological or otherwise, to "life under communism" which is to be observed from a distance and represented objectively (mimetically, or even metaphorically). This is not to argue that "lived experience" did not take place, or that it does not matter where or how these authors grew up, but that its narrative articulation is ideologically loaded and hardly occurs in a political and cultural vacuum. This ideological dimension, the narrative nontransparency, arises at the intersection between the intended audience, since much of this prose was intended primarily for Western consumption (or consumption by anticommunist, democratic-minded reformists at home), the authority accorded the philosophical insights by the power of "direct" engagement with communist politics, and the authority of victimization.[9] In this respect, it becomes almost obscene to treat the autobiographical/philosophical essays at hand as anything other than articulations of exilic truth, the unmasking of the evils of Soviet/communist politics, or, following the authors' own pleas to be treated apolitically, theorizations of exile as a metaphysical, ubiquitous creative category.[10]

Exemplary in this case is David Bethea's study of Joseph Brodsky, which argues that Roland Barthes's and Michel Foucault's theories about the "death of the author" do not apply in the case of Eastern European writers victimized by communism. Bethea proceeds to resurrect the "real"

author and his or her biography behind the writing, and insists on reading Brodsky's essays as exilic/dissident renderings of a particular biographical context. Despite such a nuanced definition, this approach nevertheless falls into the trap of assigning primacy to biography, which, because it is so primarily tragic, inspires a critical blindness in Bethea to the ideological discourses in which Brodsky's autobiographical narrativization participates. Thus, East and West are treated as unproblematic categories (since Brodsky is a victim of Eastern authoritarianism and a subscriber to a cosmopolitan, i.e., Western identity), Brodsky's praise of Western literary traditions is seen as a tool of resistance to the Eastern cultural "Stone Age," and much attention is devoted to Brodsky's identification of "essential" differences between the "anglophone and russophone traditions."[11]

I read Brodsky, as well as Miłosz and Kundera, against this ideological blindness, which, along with the concept of the author, resurrects other accoutrements of classical humanist politics and literary criticism, such as the notion of a subject who is more or less autonomous, original, logical, centered, and above all an individual emancipating him- or herself by being able to narrate his or her plight to a sympathetic audience. If we read the dissident authors in this way, we always-already treat them as emancipated, Western, subjects leaving their misguided (and silent) Eastern brethren behind, and thus perpetuate the conditions for discrimination, the conditions that make the Orientalist discourse under discussion possible. Instead, I highlight the problematic of treating the essayistic writing by Miłosz, Brodsky, and Kundera, which has largely helped them achieve and maintain public visibility in exile, as mimetic, objective representations of the lands behind the Iron Curtain.

The authors' authoritative autobiographic positions can be said to follow in the logic of "onto-typo-logy," a concept forwarded by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*. Although their plight is "different" from anything experienced in the Western world—to which this "difference" must offer its testimony—their writing and frequently their critical reception nevertheless aspire toward presenting them as what Lacoue-Labarthe calls a "type," a transcendental "form, figure, imprint, type of a *humanity*."[12] For instance, Miłosz has been famously called a "witness" of history, and even presented himself as a prophetic bearer of "secret knowledge," of "hidden truths," and Brodsky has never quite been able to shake off the designation of a "persecuted poet."[13] In becoming such transcendental figures, they impart insights that both Easterners and Westerners can presumably identify with, affirming their common human lot: Easterners can already recognize the tropes employed to describe (represent) communism, whereas Westerners receive a warning about what communism might do to their own lives and societies (while observing and judging from a safe distance the supposedly common human experiences).

I want to relate this establishment of the author—the humanist subject—as a transcendental figure to whom "belongs the role of giving meaning," the "bestowal of meaning" to the world, to the Cartesian subject who "surveys" and "sees" the world, and through whose perspective the world is mapped, geo-graphed, and divided into understandable parts.[14] In this roundabout way, I seek to relate the typography and topography in the dissident authors' writing, as their narration of the "self" is frequently inseparable from the narration of European (and global) geography and from the delineation of Easternness and Westernness, which colors their discussions of relevant East/West histories.

In this respect, the authors perform what Gearoid O Tuathail calls a depoliticization of the geographic discourse, where geography is seen as a "permanent, self-evident realm of necessity . . . independent of our beliefs and attitudes about it," in other words, as part of "Nature."[15] Brodsky's, Miłosz's, and Kundera's obsessive mapping and geo-graphing of Eastern/Central/Western Europe does not occur in a cultural and political vacuum, but rather participates in Orientalist traditions which construct Byzantium or the Ottoman Empire as more Eastern than Russia, Russia as more Eastern than Poland or Czechoslovakia, and Poland or Czechoslovakia as more Eastern than France. These shifting, unstable boundaries themselves highlight the constructed nature of such delineations, depending as they do on the authors' imagined geographic positions or national affiliations: Kundera in Czechoslovakia, Brodsky in Russia, and Miłosz in Poland/Lithuania. In this respect, Bakic-Hayden's insights about the "the gradation of 'Orients,'" the "nesting Orientalisms" and shifting hierarchies of Easternness and Westernness in the constructions of Balkan identities can be extended to the construction of European hierarchies in our dissident authors' essays.[16]

In Brodsky's essays, the history of Russia, essentialized as a tradition of despotic rule that reaches its peak with communism, becomes expressed in geographic terms: as a fault of Russia's proximity to Byzantium, and later, to Ottoman Turkey (or implicitly, Asia). If geography, as O Tuathail argues, is "naturalized—it simply 'is'" then the history of Russia becomes a narrative of inevitable causality, of endless repetition of the same, in short, of immutability.[17] Historical immutability as ascribed to the East—in contrast to which only the West progresses, from royal despotism into democracy and human rights—is of course one of the pillars of Orientalist narratives that constructed Asia as ahistorical. Brodsky places blame primarily on this Asiatic corruption of Russia which, by virtue of being somewhat close to Europe, has had potential for becoming Enlightened (Westernized). However, because of its Eastern neighbors, it could never fully realize its potential because it would always be dragged backwards. The most striking exposition of this argument emerges in his essay "Flight from Byzantium,"

where Brodsky's visit to Istanbul prompts an examination of history: "There are places where history is inescapable, like a highway accident—places where geography provokes history. Such is Istanbul, alias Constantinople, alias Byzantium."[18] The enumeration of the different names of the same city, invoking its changing yet identical masters and regimes, suggests a continuity in the Byzantine and Ottoman regimes, portrayed as Oriental and autocratic, with no history of the separation of church and state, of humanism or democracy.

In Brodsky's imaginary, Byzantine emperor Constantine adopted Christianity and aspired toward building a "Second Rome" in the East, but this would ultimately sever ties with Western development: here Christianity was "fated to become Orientalized" as, for the Second Rome, "Persia . . . was far more real than Hellas, if only in a military sense."[19] Brodsky employs images of geographic contamination as Byzantium fails to benefit from either the Roman legal traditions or Greek traditions of democracy, assumed to be out of reach. Byzantium's alleged tradition of the nonseparation of church and state is merely continued by the Ottomans, who, because they are not *even* Christian, are predictably more brutal in degree: "the anti-individualism of Islam would find the soil of Byzantium so welcoming that by the ninth century Christianity would be more than ready to flee to the north."[20] Ottomans continue Eastern traditions of "obedience, of hierarchy, of profit, of trade, of adaptability: a tradition, that is, drastically alien to the principles of moral absolute."[21]

By virtue of being from this part of the world or at least from its neighborhood, Brodsky here speaks as one—Lacoue-Labarthe's *type*—who knows its tradition of obedience and despotism intimately, and who is accorded authority, and authenticity, through "lived experience." Yet his position is that of an emancipated Western subject who can *recognize* the "lack" of democracy and human rights, which are endowed with an implicit positive valorization. From his imagined position in Russia Brodsky can still survey the Orient as a European, but one who has the advantage of *knowing* the Oriental neighbors: "born by the Baltic, in the place regarded as a window on Europe, I always felt something like a vested interest in this window on Asia with which we shared a meridian. On grounds perhaps less than sufficient, we regarded ourselves as Europeans."[22] Brodsky's distancing from the East parallels his desire to eventually distance himself from Soviet Russia as well, which inevitably continues the pattern set by Byzantium and Ottoman Turkey. Thus, the Soviet takeover is not seen as a singular event, or product of a particular historical moment, but rather as a historical inevitability: "the star and the crescent of Islam" are combined as Brodsky wonders, "And that hammer, isn't it a modified cross?"[23]

In Brodsky's portrayals of Russia's "rape" and victimization by Byzantium's Orientalized Christianity and the Ottoman anti-individualist tra-

dition, Russia is feminized and passively innocent, but once it develops its own imperialist pretensions—especially with the onset of Soviets—it acquires aggressive, conquering, and masculine attributes. Brodsky effectively combines Christian Europe's racist fears of Asian hordes and Muslim fanatics, and its fears of communist barbarians: "Isn't my native realm an Ottoman Empire now—in extent, in military might, in its threat to the Western world? Aren't we now by the walls of Vienna? And is not its threat the greater in that it proceeds from the Easternized . . . Christianity?"[24] Declaring that Western Christianity has doomed the East to nonexistence by divorcing Byzantium, Brodsky implies that it also committed the mistake of future disinterest, of not *knowing* the Eastern enemy. Brodsky's essays aim to arouse interest in the communist East among Westerners, to make it visible and knowable, but his analysis of Soviet politics shrouds it in "irrational" mystique rather than making it comprehensible to a Western reader. Since the East has always shunned "moral absolutes," the Soviet regime predictably provides the West with an example of "human evil" which Brodsky conceives as a metaphysical category. This evil simply cannot be explained in Western terms: it transcends Western ideas of law, medicine, or "norms of human behavior" used to deal with criminal offense.[25] Whether we speak of "the Iranian Imam's butchering tens of thousands of his subjects" or about Stalin's "maxim, uttered in the course of the Great Terror, that 'with us, no one is irreplaceable'" the negative human potential of the East escapes "rational" explanation: it is *inscrutable*.[26]

For Brodsky, communists are "creatures who by all human accounts should be considered degenerates," ruling in the "most unjust country in the world."[27] The October Revolution is but a criminal, unjustifiable coup d'état, and the storming of the Winter Palace merely a chance for ruthless Red Guards to "rape half the female unit guarding the palace."[28] The communist regime, in Brodsky, becomes a continuation of the czarist regime whose motto was "Russia must rule shamelessly."[29] But czars are amateurs compared to Lenin and successors, and striking here is Brodsky's preference for Peter the Great over Lenin, discussed in his essay "A Guide to a Renamed City." Although the czar's project of building a city on the Neva was "ill-conceived" and met with "formidable opposition," Brodsky still respects him for overcoming Russia's traditional inferiority complex by bravely approaching Europe through St. Petersburg.[30] Conversely, Lenin resorts to Moscow, the Russian interior, out of fear of Europe; the country again retreats "to its womblike, claustrophobic, and xenophobic condition."[31] While Lenin's regime is associated with imperialist, masculine, and aggressive characteristics, Brodsky also portrays it as insecure, introverted, and effeminate—in short, castrated—divesting it even of the power to intimidate. The regime appears more ridiculous than terrifying, incapable of even facing the world that it supposedly aims to conquer.

Although Russia's history is immutable, its proximity to the West is imagined as providing potential for some, albeit insufficient, infiltration of democratic ideas, especially in St. Petersburg, a geographically and culturally liminal city par excellence. Silver-Age Petersburg, with its tragically transient longing for world "civilization," looks *just like* any other Western city, with its Nelson-type pillars and American-type political democratic culture. Brodsky obsessively returns to this theme, arguing in "Catastrophes in the Air" that "the turn of the century" in Russia was an unusual period indeed because "technological and scientific breakthroughs . . . caus[ed] a qualitative leap in the masses' self-awareness."[32] Again, Brodsky notes, there were "more political parties than in today's America or Great Britain," but Russia was also unique in that there was a "great upsurge in philosophical writing and in science fiction with strong utopian or social-engineering overtones."[33] Russia was becoming emancipated, had recognized the "evil" of the czarist regime, and its utopianism was not necessarily a dangerous thing. However, the final articulation of that utopianism in the October revolution was a betrayal of the popular aspirations: communists, Brodsky claims, were false Messiahs.

Brodsky writes himself as a Westernized subject who embraces the ideals of democracy—freedom of speech and individualism—as a line of flight from the dystopian, collectivist (i.e., anti-individualist) communist ideology. Speaking of growing up in "Leninized" Petersburg, as Nabokov might call it, where he was drawn to Western movies, music, fashions, and literature that were haphazardly distributed or prohibited, Brodsky remarks, "With our instinct for individualism fostered at every instance by our collectivist society, with our hatred toward any form of affiliation, be that with a party, a block association, or, at that time, a family, we were more American than Americans."[34] Even as Soviet Leningrad, the city is under heavy communist censorship but persists in figuring as a window onto the ever more elusive West: Brodsky says he can "see Europe" through his radio when he catches European stations.[35] His primary concern is the elusiveness of Western art and literature that is proscribed by the Soviet regime; in turn, he tries to prove to his Western audiences that Petersburg nevertheless continues its subversive, anti-Soviet—and anti-Eastern—streak by harboring the circulation of practically inaccessible and unaffordable Western texts.

Brodsky's fascination with serendipitously encountering a book of poetry by Yeats, Auden, or T. S. Eliot in effect "triumphantly *inaugurates* a literature of empire" in Homi Bhabha's words, affirming its authority to the extent that it is disseminated and translated (despite the authorities' prohibition), exchanged, and read, even in such "political backwaters" as Soviet Russia.[36] Bhabha refers to cultural writings of British colonialism in which the "fortuitous discovery of the English book" in the "wastes of colonial India, Africa, the Caribbean" becomes "an insignia of colonial authority and a

signifier of colonial desire and discipline."[37] Brodsky performs a similar gesture of praising the power of a metropolitan English text set against the Soviet, intellectually uninteresting background. The English book positively elevates, as Brodsky notes of the poetry anthologies he obtains: "You could pull them out of your pocket in a streetcar or in a public garden, and even though the text would be only a half or a third comprehensible, they'd instantly obliterate the local reality."[38] Brodsky is not a metropolitan colonial; yet, he speaks from the place of "colonial desire," both in terms of satisfying the narcissistic desires of his projected audiences by affirming the importance of their cultural heritage, and in terms of expressing his own desire for recognition of a (non-Soviet) Russia that is conversant with Anglo-American literature.

Not surprisingly, then, he also praises Russian literature that emerged on the cultural scene of St. Petersburg, whose geography and cosmopolitan spirit allows a number of authors to look at themselves as if from outside, from a Western perspective: Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva. When this part of Russia participates in European cultural development, Petersburg is no longer Constantinople/Istanbul, but rather Alexandria, an-other center of civilization, coexistent with Athens. Predictably, Brodsky largely excludes Soviet avant-garde and socialist-realist literature from European culture: it doesn't count among civilizational achievements, and mostly retards development. Since Tolstoy, Russian prose "went down the winding, well-trodden path of mimetic writing and . . . has reached the pits of socialist realism"; even avant-garde writers like Pilnyak, Zamyatin, and Babel are reduced to "outright cynicism, and their works to tantalizing *hors d'oeuvres* on the empty table of a lean nation."[39] On the assumption that Soviet barbarians could not possibly produce interesting art, Brodsky describes modern Russian literature as a wordless "vacuum," prophesying, "Russia may exit the twentieth century without leaving great prose behind."[40]

Czesław Miłosz's essays are characterized by a discourse of cultural liminality similar to the one in Brodsky. Miłosz's imagined geographic position shifts westward, to post–World War I Wilno, a city mourned as a hapless victim of geography as much as Brodsky's Petersburg. But although Wilno lies somewhat more to the west than St. Petersburg, and is thus closer to what is understood as Europe, its location does not geo-graph it as unambiguously Western. For Miłosz, Wilno is both a civilizational bastion against, and a whipping boy of, the absolute Russian "other" lodged firmly in the unpredictable East. Its cultural liminality emerges in the idea that, while it managed to nurture a tradition of parliamentary democracy worthy of a Western government, it was always-already stunted in its development by Russian imperialist desire, to which it fell victim throughout most of its history except for the brief period between the World Wars. Significantly, during most of this period Wilno was occupied by Poland, and the rest

of Lithuania, like Poland, was independent. However, Polish nationalism and imperialist desire, while vehemently criticized by Miłosz, compare favorably to Russian territorial pretensions. Miłosz therefore focuses on the Wilno of the interwar period as a paradigm of nationalist antagonisms, and simultaneously, as a space of utopian possibilities for Europe—not unlike Brodsky's culturally thriving Petersburg of the pre–October Revolution era—preceding the descent into Nazism or Stalinism.

Miłosz's writing is, on the one hand, a testimony to his Western audiences about the historically Western leanings of Polish culture, and on the other hand, an admission of Polish inability to escape affinities—geographic, linguistic, or political—with the hated Russian neighbor. This double testimony interpellates the Polish, to invoke Althusser, as simultaneously the marginalized "others" and as potentially empowered metropolitans. This binary that denotes both a distinction *and* a cohabitation can be compared to Rey Chow's reflections on the cultural politics of ethnicity, where the "ethnic" is distinctly not the "neutral" Westerner, and yet must protest his or her ethnicity as a "captivity narrative," as "captivity-in-existence" in order to affirm—and supposedly win—the biopolitical rights imagined to be safeguarded by the West.[41] Miłosz suggests that Poland is held in ethnic captivity, so to speak, because of its geographic affiliation with Russia, implicitly presented in terms of inevitable contagion, of unfavorable cross-breeding. Russian influence on the Polish-Lithuanian Wilno is expressed in almost purely negative terms: "the long Russian dominion" had left only "bad paving, the incredible difficulty citizens had conforming to hygienic regulations," and a population of Byelorussians, hated by Lithuanians and Poles alike for their "passivity, shiftlessness, and defeatism in the face of destiny."[42] Russia, however, positively embraces the unhealthy political and cultural practices that Miłosz identifies in Poland, as all are imagined to be far more *extreme* "over there." While Miłosz "confesses" to Polish "disorder, an inability to control matter . . . recklessness, drunkenness," he says that "in Russia the inability to order one's immediate surroundings . . . reached unheard-of proportions," so that "Poles in Russia, whether voluntary or involuntary émigrés, acted as a civilizing force."[43]

The Polish are credited with a cultural fascination with the West, and a yearning to overthrow czarist despotism so as to establish democracy, but unfortunately "Poland's social structure brought her closer to Russia: in both countries capitalism appeared late and cut no durable traces in the psyche."[44] Although Russians and Poles should have been brothers in the common struggle against czarist oppression, their "incompatibility of temper" prevents such a healthy association. While Enlightened Poles saw "revolution as a means of conferring on all citizens the old parliamentary privileges of the Polish gentry," Eastern Russians "wished to destroy, to change the land into a *tabula rasa*, and then to begin to build anew."[45] For

Miłosz, Poles are at once Slavic (ethnic) like Russians, and Western (cosmopolitan, neutral) unlike Russians, which results in a curious love-hate relationship with not only Russia, but with one's own ethnic and linguistic identity. Because Polish and Russian are linguistic brothers, Poles "are able to get an intuition of 'Russianness' mainly through the language, which attracts them because it liberates their Slavic half." But, "the very thing that attracts them is at the same time menacing."[46] Slavic identity becomes an impossible object of love, which must continually be denied through a critical awareness or disidentification. Miłosz compares identical phrases in Russian and Polish, and predictably concludes that the first "connotes gloom, darkness, and power," and second "lightness, clarity, and weakness." Lest unsuspecting Poles be seduced from light into darkness by the deceptive similarities between Polish and Russian, Miłosz offers this simple practice as an "exercise in self-ridicule and a warning."[47]

Because of this shameful affiliation, Miłosz must rescue Wilno, too, as a city worthy of gracing the map of Europe, recuperating its semi-Western past from its assumed invisibility under Russian-communist occupation. Wilno is presented as a city where Miłosz grew up in the same "cultural circuit" as his contemporaries across "France, Holland, or America."[48] Miłosz enumerates popular movies, books, and theater performances that kept Wilno "parallel in time with the rest of the world"—and Poland even "had better organized theaters than many 'Western' countries."[49] Here emerges the image of Wilno as a vibrant confluence of contending university cultures, political options, religions, ethnicities, and languages, its "cosmopolitan fragments . . . probably . . . closer to Paris than to Warsaw."[50] Within this multicultural space Miłosz politically affiliates himself with Jewish anti-nationalist, intellectual movements throughout the 1920s and 1930s because of their opposition to anti-Semitism and their Leftist internationalist convictions pitched against Polish and Lithuanian right-wing parties.[51] But already in the 1930s there is a sense of impending doom, which will be brought on by Nazism and later by Soviet occupation and communist dictatorship.

Miłosz's temporary engagement with Leftist, Marxist politics in no way diminishes the importance of his virulent condemnation of communism as a regime *and* as a philosophy. It is necessarily linked to his view of Russia as an Asiatic backwater and frequently employs essentializing Marxist clichés and the Cold War jargon. In "Marxism," Miłosz describes the popularity of Marxist thought and communist politics as a result of a world that has become too difficult "to grasp either scientifically or humanistically"; it draws "primitive" minds with a "need for faith" and a "simplified outlook on life."[52] He equates Communism with Stalinism, portraying it as a bundle of simplistic, messianic clichés, a "catechism or a brochure" for those who need to believe in progress and overcome "the feeling of powerlessness

in the face of chaos."[53] The messianism of communism, the perception of communism-as-religion, is associated with Russia and its aggressive, unnatural mixture of "revolutionary theory and the dream Russians had of themselves as a chosen nation."[54] As such, Marxism can only appeal to the young and psychologically immature, searching for comradeship and meaning of life. As we will see, Kundera downplays the philosophical legacy of Marxism employing a similar discourse of pathologization, with its pseudo-psychoanalytical discussions of herd mentality, individual insecurity, and/or frustration with personal life. Indeed, in this essay Miłosz discusses his youthful engagement with Marxism, which already implicitly exonerates him—he could not have known any better *then*—and yet, he is also at pains to show that he never fully absorbed Marxist ideology.

According to Miłosz, had it not been for foreign interventions characterized by extreme, fanatic ideological allegiances, whether Marxist or Nazi, locally grown nationalisms would not have amounted too much. While the Polish are "excitable and anarchic," they "seem not to lose moral restraints," and lack the discipline that would "justify cruelties committed in cold blood."[55] Of course, this distinction conveniently serves to elevate locally grown nationalist violence above Nazi ruthlessness and, what is particularly significant for our purposes, Soviet fanaticism. Miłosz frequently grieves over Soviet/communist occupation of the once vibrant, modern, European cities, and in doing so effectively promotes narratives of authentic innocence, of "noble savagery" prior to the fall. While Wilno's tragedy is great, it is still to be expected as the city is semi-Western and under considerable Russian influence historically; however, in the case of Prague, a "Western European capital," at stake is an unnatural and bungled, almost artificial penetration of the West by the East.[56] For Brodsky, civilization moves from South to North; for Miłosz, "the flow of ideas, like the colonization of primeval forest lands and steppes, [is] a movement from West to East."[57] Seen from this perspective, any reversal seems abnormal.

As a result, the prewar Prague of Miłosz's 1931 travels, described as a carnivalesque, pansexual paradise, with "couples kissing . . . hot, jostling, embracing humanity" and "effervescent air of laughter and music, its taverns in the narrow streets near Hradcany Castle" is contrasted with the desexualized and barren 1950 Prague, where Miłosz sees only the "huge fellow with the face of a hoodlum, wearing the uniform of the Czech Security Police" and a "handful of people in dark, ill-fitting suits . . . whispering among themselves."[58] The reader is then transported to yet another Eastern Bloc city, Warsaw, which similarly features "Colorless streets in the twilight. Pedestrians walk[ing] quickly, with downcast eyes."[59]

In these portrayals, Russia at first looms as an aggressive, masculine bully who rapes the incomparably weaker opponents such as Poland, Czech Republic, or Hungary. Miłosz would thus seem to arouse sympathy for the

East-Central European damsels in distress, yet his rapid realignment of gendered attributes along the traditional lines of the effeminate East and the masculine West betrays his investment in Orientalist rhetoric and the validity of the Western subject who alone can survey, map, narrate—in short, successfully penetrate and conquer—the world. Unlike the healthily, not aggressively, masculine West, Russia is given to extremes, to a pathological need to flaunt its power and colonize, yet without the necessary *tool*, so to speak. Therefore, castrated Russia's imperialist interventions appear prosthetic, pitiful, and superficial. Miłosz overhears Soviet commissars speaking of Baltic and Polish territories acquired, and compares them to "Alices in Wonderland" who think of these countries not with friendliness, but with "envy and anger."[60]

On another occasion, he hints at the frustration of Soviet attempts to conquer Europe despite military might; they simply lack the finesse, and can only exclaim "Europe is ours" with a "threatening tone, the revenge" brought on by "Russian self-inebriation."[61] In contrast, Miłosz, the emancipated Easterner (or the half-Westerner) possesses this secret knowledge of conquest, or as he says, "[I] understood more of the entangled, never straight paths of civilization."[62] While a Russian can only treat France, for instance, with "contempt, because . . . discreet and hidden, [it] was inaccessible to him," Miłosz "*penetrated* her gradually, beginning with that summer in 1931."[63] Perhaps it is not surprising then that Miłosz provocatively casts Russia as a woman who needs a Polish husband, employing a traditionally colonialist trope of a country which cannot govern "herself" but must be governed.

Similar to Brodsky and Miłosz, much of Kundera's essayistic (as well as fictional) production delineates clear civilizational hierarchies and myths of origin associated with his ideal of Europe, enhancing both the image of Czechoslovakia in the West and invoking their responsibility for abandoning European Czechs to communist, non-European Soviets. Although Kundera insists on a distinction between Europe and non-Europe, his paradigms are a variation on the familiar culturally and politically charged discourses that position Western Europe as civilizationally superior to Eastern Europe. This type of intra-European Orientalism in Kundera is somewhat obfuscated—and modified—by his praise of Central Europe as an "uncertain zone of small nations" between the two poles, by a frequent disparagement of Western European consumerism and postmodernity in general, and especially by the use of the seemingly neutral term Europe, and its definition as a culture rather than territory.[64]

For Kundera, the term Europe signifies a unified cultural development associated with "ancient Greece and Judeo-Christian thought."[65] He does not focus on the religious component of this culture, but on the development of an intellectual tradition that nurtures original thought, individual rights,

skepticism, play, and satire. The development of a Christian society of "feeling" and "sentimentality" was—in the West—complemented by this intellectual spirit of doubt and play from the Renaissance onwards: "It was then that the West truly came into its own."[66] Kundera designates the European Enlightenment as a high point in this development because of its allegedly libertine spirit, satirical irreverence, and use of reason for an exploration of "being" rather than for "the police, the law, the world of money and crime, the army, the State."[67] The manifestations of this spirit are traced in the European novel, also imagined to have a unified development, beginning with Diderot, Cervantes, Rabelais, and Sterne who "reach heights of playfulness, or lightness, never scaled before or since."[68] Hence, reason that is used instrumentally, first for capitalist production and regimentation toward the end of the eighteenth century, and later for similar purposes in communist societies, is a deviation, or corruption of the "gentle, tender reason" of the Enlightenment: it constitutes humanity's fall from grace.[69] When reason is used to achieve total rationality, "pure irrationality . . . seizes the world stage."[70]

This "irrationality" characterizes modern societies in both Eastern and Western Europe. Throughout Kundera's novels and essays, it is habitually associated with bureaucracy, social conformism and the mass production of everything, destroying original thought—and the novel. In Western Europe, "the cultural elite" has yielded to "the elite of the mass media apparatus"; in Eastern Europe, to "the elite of the police apparatus."[71] Ideologies have been watered down to a few simplistic slogans and clichés, in the contemporary era replaced by isolated and fragmented television images designed to brainwash the masses and announcing what Kundera calls "imagology."[72] Here we arrive at another evil of the post-Enlightenment Europe that Kundera consistently denounces: the crowd mentality associated with any utopia, group belief, political protest, and predictably, any revolutionary endeavor.

Kundera's critique of Soviet communism endeared him to both right-wing and left-wing audiences in the 1960s and 1970s France: to the former, for obvious reasons, and to the latter, because it was complemented by Kundera's seemingly equal denouncement of Western capitalism and consumerism, his own (much repressed since) communist affiliation in Czechoslovakia and his image as an opponent of Stalinism, supporter of the Dubcek regime, the Prague Spring, and "socialism with a human face." However, his repeated attacks on any leftist politics as a manifestation of crowd mentality and thus a deviation from European reason paint Kundera's politics as rather conservative, if not simplistic. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, he derides Western leftist-liberals who, in a desire to conform and support all the right causes, participate in the "Grand March of the European Left"; in *Immortality* he argues that what makes people fight in revolutions or protest

is not reason—let alone urgency—but a "hypertrophied soul" and a yearning to "step onto the stage of history."[73] This "lyrical, neurotic expectation of some great deed" is also responsible for French penchant for "radical ideologic postures," compensating for France's diminishing political and cultural power.[74] But while Western leftist may receive a mild slap on the fingers for their rush to participate in Europe's "Grand March," Eastern leftists (especially Soviets and their foreign lackeys) are accused of bungling the tradition altogether, their revolutions being "a parody condensation of the European revolutionary tradition . . . the continuation and grotesque fulfillment of the era of European revolutions."[75]

This statement epitomizes Kundera's treatment of Eastern Europeans which most frequently equals Russians and/or Soviets, but may also encompass other Eastern communists. In Kundera, Russians and communists are either entirely alien to Europe, promoting the dangerous politics and culture against which he defines the European ideal and its borders, or they are somewhat Europeanized by virtue of proximity, but only as grotesque, deformed mimics of European achievements who effectively ruin even the idea of revolution (itself not the most glorious European tradition). Europe thus comes to signify Western Europe, as most qualities that Kundera praises as universally good and desirable—reason, satire and cynicism, individualism—are associated with France, England, Germany, or Spain (broadly, the tradition of the European Enlightenment). Eastern Europe, explicitly Russia, is associated with the opposites (feeling, blind belief, crowd mentality); it never contributes anything of its own, but is rather judged on how well it can adapt to the Enlightened traditions. In the paradigm in which Russia is absolutely alien to Europe, it is portrayed as a separate civilization. Its history "differs from the history of the west precisely in its lack of a Renaissance and of the spirit that resulted"—presumably the spirit of the Enlightenment, which Russia also "lacks."[76] Like Brodsky, Kundera establishes a continuity between czarist absolutism and communist authoritarianism: "totalitarian Russian civilization" is a "radical negation of the modern West"; it is a "singular civilization, an *other* civilization."[77] The brilliance of Kundera's Orientalism, however, is embodied in a seemingly paradoxical statement that communism is both a negation *and* a fulfillment of Russia's history. It negates Russia's religiosity, which portrays it as something unnatural, violent, and disruptive, but it also echoes the czarist rule, symbolizing Russia's immutable irrationality and representing a "fulfillment of its centralizing tendencies and its imperial dreams."[78]

In the paradigm in which Russia has potential to become European, Europe is more explicitly portrayed as a culture with some mobility despite geographic barriers. Kundera praises Russia's attempts to draw closer to Europe in the nineteenth century, and at this point includes Russian novelists in the master-narrative of the development of the European novel. He especially

praises Tolstoy, Gogol, and Chekhov as contributors to the European legacy while maintaining a vexed relationship with Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky receives some praise as a non-dogmatic, "great thinker," whose novel *The Possessed*, for instance, exemplifies a successful polyphonic text.[79] But Kundera's vitriolic attack on Dostoevsky in "An Introduction to a Variation" is probably better known than his praise. Here, Dostoevsky embodies all that is evil about Russia: his "universe of overblown gestures, murky depths, and aggressive sentimentality" mimetically symbolizes Russia's communist ideology and occupation of Czechoslovakia.[80] With this image of Russian literature looming large over the "enlightened" Chekhovs and the Tolstoys, the history of the European novel, which begins in the West, predictably ends in the East: "About half a century ago the history of the novel came to a halt in the empire of Russian Communism."[81] The majority of works written under communists do not count; because they promote totalitarian propaganda, they discover nothing new about "being." As in Brodsky, they arrive "after the history of the novel" and place themselves "*outside* that history," epitomizing the way in which Kundera banishes Russia from the narrative of European history.[82]

While the novel—and with it, European culture—dies in the communist East, its death is prefigured in what Kundera calls Central European novels, in the era of "*terminal paradoxes* of the Modern Era" following World War I. Faced with the "impersonal, uncontrollable, incalculable" monster of "History," Kafka, Musil, Broch, Gombrowicz, and others examine how the very existential categories, such as freedom, future, or crime change their meaning.[83] Central Europe becomes an exceptional cultural terrain in Europe, the apogee of its Enlightenment, inheritor of the irreverent spirit of Sterne and others, and a symbol of the approaching death of Europe. That Kundera, despite his stated cosmopolitan Europeanism, resorts to such a regional-cultural construct—one which also affirms its unspoken complements, Western and Eastern Europe—reveals several crucial concepts in his vision of Europe. Including in Central European culture the literatures of Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, Kundera attempts to break, but not do away with, the civilizational boundaries between East and West, arguing that Czechoslovakia is more similar to Austria, for instance, than to Russia. Echoing Miłosz, this concept is illustrated in Kundera's rejection of Czechoslovakia's identification with Russia based on the "the ideology of the Slavic world" and in an alternative identification with other "small" and "weak" Central European nations that used to comprise the Habsburg empire.[84] This results in some colonial nostalgia in Kundera when he argues that Central European countries "blew apart [the Austro-Hungarian] empire in 1918, without realizing that in spite of its inadequacies it was irreplaceable."[85] Additionally, Kundera invests the Czechoslovak experience with European relevance—making it an indisputable part of Europe—when

he portrays Central European history as a mirror of future European development.

Predictably, then, Kundera tries to prove that Central Europe is "the eastern border of the West," one of Europe's "centers of gravity" which is perishing because the West allowed "Byzantine" Russia to establish there the uncivilized communist regime.[86] The martyrdom of Czechoslovakia—and Kundera himself—is frequently emphasized by Kundera's use of sentimental, moral, and seemingly politically neutral language: "Faced with the eternity of the Russian night, I had experienced in Prague the violent end of Western culture. . . . In a small Western country I experienced the end of the West. That was the grand farewell."[87] By portraying himself and his country as more European than Europe, Kundera can successfully invoke the guilt of Western Europe for not rescuing the enlightened Central Europeans from communism and Russia. Finally, through this invocation of Western guilt, Kundera implies that an association with Western culture and politics is something to be desired, despite its alleged abdication to mass media and vulgar consumerism.

My intention in this essay is not to downplay in the least the gravity of Soviet occupation of the Eastern Bloc, but rather to point to the ideological blindness to racist discourses which underlie expressions of outrage at this historical injustice—the ideologically loaded tropes and concepts that today circulate in official political discourses lauding Eastern Europeans' achievements in becoming more Western European, or simply, European. Equally, I argue for an analysis of Eastern Europe's distancing from Soviet "utopianism" and transition to "realistic" Western-type politics in the context of overcoming the historic stigma of political and cultural backwardness, foolhardiness, or immaturity. This is especially urgent as the discourse of civilized and responsible capitalist-democratic politics embellishes the various dependencies created in Eastern Europe during the abandonment of "barbaric" communism: a subordinate position to or within the EU, growing class differences enshrining the local neocolonial elites, service economies, and a widespread loss of social(ist) benefits.

More broadly, my essay aims to raise awareness of the discursive dismissal, in Eastern Europe and globally, of leftist political alternatives, including their utopian, emancipatory potential. This political demonization has affected communist regimes *and* philosophical thought alike: it established a short-circuited correspondence between the complex and varied body of Marxist (or other leftist) intellectual thought and Eastern European regimes as the only possible *praxis* launched by such thought, usually ending in warnings about its dangerous utopianism. Also, it has presented the varied communist regimes as themselves monolithic, unrelentingly oppressive and destructive, discounting their equally complex histories, legacies, and interactions. In this respect, my essay asks how we can get out of the predicament of positing liberal-democratic capitalism as

the master-signifier, or the final horizon of contemporary politics. Reclaiming the utopian gesture, I highlight the importance of immanent critique, or as Jeffrey Stevenson Murer's presentation suggests, of thinking beyond the "Realized Socialist" regimes and resurrecting the radical potential of Marxist politics.[88]

## NOTES

This chapter previously appeared in Natasa Kovacevic, *Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Used with permission from the publisher.

1. Jeffrey Stevenson Murer, "A Rereading of the Critical Sociology of the Budapest and Frankfurt Schools," unpublished paper delivered at the annual international young researchers conference of the Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, October 27–29, 2005.

2. See Natasa Kovacevic, *Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

3. See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Dusan Bjelic and Obrad Savic, *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Andrew Hammond, *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other* (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2004); Roumiana Deltcheva, "East Central Europe as a Politically Correct Scapegoat: The Case of Bulgaria," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 1, no. 2 (1999), available from http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb99-2/deltcheva99-1.html; and Milica Bakic-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917–31.

4. The history and political context of the assorted Eastern European (and specifically Balkan) stereotypes have been discussed at length by Wolff, Todorova, Hammond, and the contributors to Bjelic and Savic's anthology.

5. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 8.

6. For historical and rhetorical analyses of Cold War Orientalisms see Andrew Hammond, *Cold War Literature: Writing the Global Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Suzanne Clark, *Cold Warriors: Manliness on Trial in the Rhetoric of the West* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); and Martin Medhurst and H. W. Brands, *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).

7. According to Rastko Mocnik, the same "Orientalist ideology that downgrades and holds down" the region as a whole "also holds up the ruling position of local political classes, which in turn act . . . as the local agents of the international system

of domination" (Bjelic and Savic, *Balkan as Metaphor*, 85). This double domination, in turn, facilitates and is facilitated by a generally favorable attitude to the ideal of European civilization and an almost fatalistic consensus that the current model of Western social development is the way to go (postcommunist transitions are necessarily difficult and may take centuries, but it is worth it because prosperity—and acceptance by the world community—awaits us). In *Narrating Post/Communism*, I show that this acceptance of Western models has, overall, been far smoother, more voluntary and more urgently executed across Eastern Europe than in other colonial locales because of the region's geographic, political and cultural proximity to Western Europe and indirectly, to North America. In fact, it is this voluntary—and largely unrecognized—self-colonizing tendency vis-à-vis the West which distinguishes Eastern Europe from other targets of Western colonialism.

8. Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Demise of Leninism and the Future of Liberal Values," unpublished paper delivered at the annual international young researchers conference of the Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, October 27–29, 2005.

9. Brodsky wrote his poetry in Russian, but his essays in English (many were originally lectures delivered at American universities, or editorials published in American magazines or journals), "explaining" Russia to English-speaking audiences. Miłosz notes that his fantastically popular *The Captive Mind*, which launched him into the dissident intellectual spotlight, was "only a pragmatic of even pedagogical undertaking" intended for Western intellectuals (Madeline Levine, "Warnings to the West: Czesław Miłosz's Political Prose of the 1950s," in *Between Anxiety and Hope: The Poetry and Writing of Czesław Miłosz*, ed. Edward Mozejko [Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988], 113). Interest in Miłosz's poetry grew significantly only after he was awarded the Nobel Prize; until then, his American audiences knew him primarily for his essays and his English translations of Polish poetry. *The Captive Mind* was subsequently translated for Polish audiences and circulated in *samizdat* channels.

10. Kundera has opposed the purely political or historical readings of his novels, insisting that he examines the "existential situations" of his characters, regardless of the political regime or country (see *The Art of the Novel* [New York: Grove, 1988], 36). His preface to *The Joke* declares this novel a "love story" in an attempt to complicate political readings; for Kundera, reading Eastern European novels via the "wretched political code" of their countries is equal to the work of "Stalinist dogmatists" (see "Comedy Is Everywhere," *Index on Censorship*, no. 6 [1977]: 6). Brodsky likewise opposes the political readings of his exilic texts, insisting that exile is a ubiquitous, "metaphysical" category (see especially his essay "The Condition We Call Exile," in *On Grief and Reason* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995]). Miłosz similarly resists being cast as a political writer because of his exile, saying "*The Captive Mind* imprisoned me . . . in a special category. . . . I wanted to be myself and not a political scientist or a sociologist" (see William Phillips et al., "Intellectuals and Writers since the Thirties," in *Partisan Review* 59, no. 4 [1994]: 537).

11. David Bethea, *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 211, 40, 227.

12. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 52.

13. Arguing that this image has somehow become Brodsky's final image, Richard Kostelanetz cites as an example Brodsky's obituary in the *New York Times* which begins, "Joseph Brodsky, the Persecuted Russian Poet" ("Joseph Brodsky and the Myth of Privileged Background," *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* 16 [1996]: 240). Miłosz vehemently protests against the *New York Review of Books*' "reduction of his long and complex career to a single term": "Witness" (Clare Cavanagh, "The Americanization of Czesław Miłosz," *Literary Imagination: The Review of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics* 6, no. 3 [2004]: 351). According to Bozena Karwowska, though, Miłosz actively worked on this self-presentation, marketing himself as a seer of "hidden knowledge," almost a prophet-like figure ("Czesław Miłosz's Self-Presentation in English-Speaking Countries," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 40, nos. 3–4 [1998]: 286–67).

14. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 55.

15. Gearoid O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 51.

16. Milica Bakic-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 918.

17. O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 50.

18. Joseph Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," in *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 406–7.

19. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 413–14.

20. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 416.

21. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 417.

22. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 440.

23. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 429.

24. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 438.

25. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 423.

26. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 422.

27. Brodsky, "Less Than One," in *Less Than One*, 32.

28. Brodsky, "Less Than One," 87–88.

29. Brodsky, "Flight from Byzantium," 438.

30. Brodsky, "A Guide to a Renamed City," in *Less Than One*, 71.

31. Brodsky, "A Guide to a Renamed City," 82.

32. Brodsky, "Catastrophes in the Air," in *Less Than One*, 285.

33. Brodsky, "Catastrophes in the Air," 285.

34. Brodsky, "Spoils of War," in *On Grief and Reason: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 14.

35. Brodsky, "Spoils of War," 7.

36. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 102.

37. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 102.

38. Brodsky, "To Please a Shadow," in *Less Than One*, 366.

39. Brodsky, "Catastrophes in the Air," 277.

40. Brodsky, "Catastrophes in the Air," 269.

41. Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 42.

42. Czesław Miłosz, "City of My Youth," in *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), 56–57.

43. Miłosz, "Russia," in *Native Realm*, 133.
44. Miłosz, "Russia," 133.
45. Miłosz, "Russia," 134–35.
46. Miłosz, "Russia," 138.
47. Miłosz, "Russia," 138.
48. Miłosz, "City of My Youth," 59.
49. Miłosz, "City of My Youth," 60.
50. Miłosz, "Dictionary of Wilno Streets," in *To Begin Where I Am: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 46.
51. Miłosz, "City of My Youth," 56; "Nationalities," in *Native Realm*, 95.
52. Miłosz, "Marxism," in *Native Realm*, 114.
53. Miłosz, "Marxism," 114–17.
54. Miłosz, "Marxism," 123.
55. Miłosz, "Nationalities," 104.
56. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," in *To Begin Where I Am*, 59.
57. Miłosz, "Russia," 130.
58. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," 59–60.
59. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," 60.
60. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," 59.
61. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," 74.
62. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," 74.
63. Miłosz, "Journey to the West," 74 (italics mine).
64. Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books*, April 26, 1984, p. 221.
65. Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 218.
66. Milan Kundera, "An Introduction to a Variation," in *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of a Central European Culture*, no. 5 (1986): 470.
67. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 8.
68. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 15.
69. Milan Kundera, *Slowness* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), 31.
70. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 10.
71. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 127.
72. For instance, see Kundera's *Immortality* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).
73. Kundera, *Immortality*, 212.
74. Milan Kundera, "Afterword: A Talk with the Author," in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Penguin, 1984), 231.
75. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 40.
76. Kundera, "Introduction to a Variation," 474.
77. Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 222, 218.
78. Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 218.
79. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 78–79.
80. Kundera, "Introduction to a Variation," 469.
81. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 14.
82. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 14.
83. Kundera, *Art of the Novel*, 12.
84. Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 219.

85. Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 219.
86. Kundera, "Tragedy of Central Europe," 217; Kundera, "Afterword," 231.
87. Kundera, "Introduction to a Variation," 216.
88. Murer, "A Rereading of the Critical Sociology of the Budapest and Frankfurt Schools."

# III

# IN SEARCH OF A (NEW) MISSION

# 8

# Somatic Nationalism: Theorizing Post-Soviet Ethnicity in Russia

*Serguei Alex. Oushakine*

> What has been happening in Russia since 1985 is a prolonged obliteration (*gibel'*) of the integral social organism of Russia, an obliteration of the Russian nation through its degradation and extinction. Not everyone in the world sees this obliteration as a tragedy. . . . For some, it is a desired and welcome event, especially for those who had been preparing this obliteration in advance and who were taking part in its implementation. . . . The implacable and grim truth, though, is that nothing like that has ever happened in the history of the Russian nation. A nation can die only once in its historical time; as it can be born only once.
>
> —Aleksandr Zinoviev, a Russian sociologist

In the early 1780s, Johann Blumenbach (1752–1840), an anthropologist and comparative anatomist from the German Gottingen, was wrestling with the issue of the agency that defines development and regeneration of living organisms. The juxtaposition of entelechy and mechanicism, the two dominant frameworks of the time, seemed unsatisfactory. The preformationist theory insisted that everything could be traced back to the original germs, and thus did not allow for any new development.[1] In turn, the mechanical theory of development located the primary cause of regeneration of living organisms in the interplay of physical and chemical forces only, and refused to admit the existence of any other substance that could distinguish living organisms from other material objects.

Disappointed with both extremes, Blumenbach found a solution in the formative function of organization itself. After a series of experiments on fresh water polyps, the naturalist drew attention to the fact that the polyp tends to regenerate amputated parts. Significantly, these new parts replicated

the original configuration of the lost element rather than its color or size. It was precisely the body's ability to re-produce the structure—although often in a diminished ("depressed") form—that epitomized in Blumenbach's view the organizing and purposive force of all living bodies. This persistent tendency of a living organism to maintain its internal organization—despite the unfavorable or even harmful exchanges with the surrounding environment—Blumenbach defined as *Bildungtrieb*, formative or vital force.[2] Generalizing from his experience, Blumenbach concluded:

> there is no such thing in nature, as pre-existing organized germ . . . the organized matter of generation, after being duly prepared, and having arrived at its place of destination takes on a particular action, or nisus, which nisus continues to act through the whole life of the animal, and by it the first form of the animal, or plant is not only determined, but afterwards preserved, and when deranged, is again restored.[3]

In combination with the mechanical principle (which causes, for instance, crystallization of minerals) this *Nisus Formativus* was seen as capable of sustaining the progressive formation of the organism, providing a consistent support, necessary repairs, and reproductions when injuries take place.[4] Replicating the logic of the Newtonian mechanics, Blumenbach was quick to point out that his version of epigenesis was not supposed to describe the cause of generation, which is "involved in Cimmerian darkness," just as the cause of gravitation or attraction is.[5] Rather, the idea was to analyze the effects produced by this force.[6] The very existence of the organic form, in other words, was endowed with the significance of the teleological principle.[7]

Apart from the considerable influence that Blumenbach's work had on development of life science in Europe, his version of vitalism produced yet another important outcome.[8] Impressed by the insights of the naturalist, Immanuel Kant wrote in his letter to Blumenbach in 1790:

> Your work has taught me a great many things; indeed your recent unification of the two principles, namely the physico-mechanical one and the teleological—which everyone had otherwise thought to be incompatible—has a very close relation to the ideas that currently occupy me but which require just the sort of the factual information that you provide.[9]

Informed by Blumenbach's work,[10] Kant's *Critique of the Teleological Judgment*, in fact, presents precisely a discussion of the "internal purposiveness in organized beings,"[11] purposiveness that originates *within* the organism as an interplay between its parts and its whole, between the content and the form.[12]

In this chapter I want to show how the same epistemological move—from a traumatic injury to vital organization—was replicated during the two post-Soviet decades by a group of Siberian social scientists in their sociological writings on vital forces of the Russian ethnos [*etnos*]. While switching from the eighteenth-century Germany to contemporary Russia, I want to keep in mind the double characteristic of materialist vitalism provided by Kant and embodied by Blumenbach.

Instead of seeing in contemporary attempts to revive and reformulate vitalism yet another example of the post-Soviet turn to the occult and/or paranormal, I want to approach these desperate yet rational attempts to find an "objective" factor of regeneration, to outline a "comprehensive" explanation of ethnic development somewhat differently. I will construe them as a form of a post-utopian thought, as an alternative post-Soviet framework, which in a double discursive move tries to distance from the flattening mechanical functionalism of postcommunist neoliberal changes, and—simultaneously—to envision the "organismic ontology"[13] of the Russian nation as a new logic of nation building. Decidedly non-Marxist, this intellectual framework presents, nonetheless, a telling example of intellectual strategies through which post-Soviet intelligentsia in Russia makes itself relevant after the collapse of state socialism.

In what follows, I focus mostly on texts that I collected in 2001 to 2004 during my fieldwork in Barnaul, the administrative center of the Altai region, located in Siberian part of Russia, on the borders with China, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan. All texts were produced by professional provincial intelligentsia, that is, professors of philosophy, sociology, and cultural studies in several Siberian universities. While traditionally being a very articulate and active segment of the Russian society, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the intelligentsia has started losing its social prominence. At least, to some extent, multiple alarmist scenarios and forecasts produced by this group could be seen as a reflection on the intelligentsia's own diminishing role.[14] At the same time, such publications provide a useful link to understanding imaginary constructions of the national belonging in a situation where more positive ways of "inventing traditions" and "imagining communities" are unavailable or discredited.

Academic texts that I will analyze fall into two major categories. First, I will quickly review the genre of *ethnohistories of trauma*, in which current problems in Russia are usually addressed through the constant rewriting of Russia's past in order to demonstrate the non-Russian character of its national/state institutions, and, correspondingly, the anti-Russian nature of these institutions' politics. Understood as an organic body, the Russian ethnos becomes split off from available political institutions and emerges as an easy target for "external" and "alien" forces. Teleology of the vital

becomes reversed here; regeneration is read backwards—as a process of organized extinction.

Then, I will focus on the second category, *ethnovitalism*. While being closely associated with the rhetoric and methods of traumatic ethnohistories, *ethnovitalism* is less preoccupied with the unceasing portrayal of the past harm and sufferings of the nation. Its main goal is to provide the analytics of ethnic survival, to outline methods that could "compensate the loss of cultural genotype" of the Russian nation.[15] The struggle over constructing and interpreting the nation's memory of the past, so typical for traumatic ethnohistories, is replaced in ethnovitalism by a similar struggle over constructing and interpreting perceptions of the nation's *current* experience.

Created by highly educated and articulate scholars in social sciences, these two organismic versions of ethnocentric narratives usefully point to the painful role of a differentiating split that produces a sense of national unity in post-Soviet Russia.

## ETHNOHISTORIES OF TRAUMA: RUSSIAN TRAGEDY AS A RUSSIAN CROSS

The "Russian tragedy" is by no means a unified or a homogeneous script. It is articulated differently by people with different social trajectories and educational histories. These differences matter, yet despite all its variations, the "Russian tragedy" has a core of ideas and images that point to the reason behind the choice of this traumatic genre. With some modifications, this framework is often employed in mass media and daily communication. The metaphor of the "Russian cross" epitomizes the logic of the Russian tragedy, perhaps, most vividly.

Apparently, the concept has been around for quite some time, but it became especially popular in the Barnaul media during the discussion of the first results of the 2002 National Census. As the argument goes, Russia's population is steadily decreasing every year. There are two major demographic reasons for this. One is the general increase in the number of deaths in Russia: since 1999, 700,000 to 900,000 people die annually. The other major factor that contributes to Russia's "depopulation" is a declining birth rate. The superimposition of the diagrams of these two processes produces a graphic image that was quickly labeled the "Russian cross" (*russkii krest*).[16]

This preoccupation with the biological condition of the nation is hardly new. The "Russian cross," not without a certain twist, illustrates a typical tendency of modern political regimes to institute themselves through a discourse, in which "every people is doubled by a population," as Giorgio Agamben put it.[17] The population, then, becomes quickly "ethnocized"

emerging as a natural category, as an unproblematic unit of sociobiological taxonomy.

There is another important moment, too. What differentiates the *post-Soviet* biopolitical doubling from other similar examples is its overwhelming orientation toward the *past*. By and large, biopolitical distinctions of the "Russian cross" aren't evoked to stimulate ethnically exclusive pronatalist policies in the future.[18] Wrapped in demographic terms, the story about the dying out nation is a *historical* project. Providing an inverted teleology, it aims at delineating, at pacing out the path that has lead to the current (miserable) location.

Conflation of the demographic and the religious in the "Russian cross" adds yet another important dimension to this traumatic narration. The conflation is instrumental in moving a discussion of technical issues of social policies, health and child care or the epidemics of alcoholism toward the predictable fascination with the nation's suffering. In the process of this conflation, Russia's depopulation is often transformed into stories about the "genocide of the Russian people."[19] These stories, then, quickly slip into a discussion of a deliberately conceived and purposefully implemented program of ethnic extermination. Gavriil Popov, a former mayor of Moscow and one of the most active "pro-democratic" politicians (*demokrat*) of the perestroika period, for instance, wrote in 2000:

> I think there was a Russian (*russkii*) Holocaust. It was organized by the Soviet state and the communist party, which was in charge of it. Burning humans alive is not the only way to constantly reduce their number. The nation could be burnt at construction sites of communism. Or—in fights with imperialist aggressors. Or—in a process of collectivization. . . . Overburdened with inhumane tasks by the leader, the nation could be killed in a doomed experiment of building communism in an isolated country. The people could be destroyed by the Soviet ideology that mercilessly deadens their minds and dries out their spiritual energy, persistently extirpating the century-old foundations of the people's life. The demographic data and predictions regarding the future of ethnic Russians is nothing but evidence of a holocaust.[20]

A Barnaul journalist suggests an exactly opposite correlation between the Soviet state and "resistance" of the Russian *etnos*, framing it as a question: "Is it just a mere coincidence that [the Russian cross emerged] exactly in the period when the previous [Soviet] state order (*gosudarstvennoe ustroistvo*) was broken down, and new reforms started?"[21] In turn, Aleksandr Prokhozhev, a professor from the Altai State Pedagogical University, bluntly identifies in his book *The Shadow People* the "perpetrators of the genocide": "The decade of complete Jewish dominance in Russia has resulted in the surplus of deaths over births. Every year the population of Russia shrinks by one million. Two million homeless children wander around the country.

There was nothing similar to that even after the Great Patriotic War [in 1941–1945]. Now, Russia is in a debtor's prison, totally subordinated to the Jewish bankers from the International Monetary Fund."[22]

Regardless of their particular political preferences, each of these versions of the Russian tragedy is rooted in the same rhetorical striving to envision the "natural life" of the Russian ethnos as separate from the development of its national forms. State and nation or, to be more precise, state and ethnos became discursively split: political institutions of the nation and the nation's organic body assumed noncoinciding symbolic and social locations.

It is important that in these traumatic narratives of loss it is not a unifying/unified community that is constantly imagined. Theories of "stolen" statehood and "appropriated" culture seem to indicate a profound difficulty with translating current changes into a language outside the vocabulary of blame and hatred. Despite all the biopolitical caesuras and gaps introduced by ethnohistories of trauma, they fail to produce a stabilizing effect. Imagined ethnic divides don't perform the function of the constitutive "cut" that could set the subject "apart" and thus define the range of the subject's symbolic and identificatory possibilities.[23]

Rather, a proliferation of the discourse of abjection, with its repetitious operations of division and separation, reminds one the figure of a stray *deject*, described by Julia Kristeva: "A deviser of territories, languages, works, [he] never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines . . . constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh."[24] Different versions of the "Russian tragedy" point toward a similar unceasing (and unsuccessful) search for an "anchoring point" that could stop the "endless movement of the signification," and render the nation's experience meaningful.[25] Let me turn to the genre of ethnovitalism now.

## FORCES OF VITALISM

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that for the Altai ethnovitalists, traumatic stories about the Russian nation had the same revealing effect as for Blumenbach his experiments with amputated polyps. The purposiveness of the living organism—in this case, the Russian *etnos*—was found in the very act of reproducing and maintaining the original material structure. Such an organismic perception of the *etnos* not only brought with it an extensive—somatic—vocabulary, but also it provided Siberian scholars with a particular narrative logic that easily incorporated the teleological tropes of death and revival of the Russian *etnos*. To put it slightly differently, the attractiveness of somatic metaphors and narratives for today's vitalism seems to be rooted exactly in the same intellectual move that more than two centuries

ago had imbricated the organismic activity with the nonorganic matter and thus created a narrative of development, a story of life.[26]

Throughout the 1990s, the Faculty of Sociology at the Altai State University has been actively developing a comprehensive, albeit often confusing, sociological theory, in which issues of ethnic difference become a prominent tool for explaining Russia's current situation. Depictions of the national pain and misery were *not* seen as the end in itself but were used as a starting point for analyzing the process of the national regeneration. It appears that the recognition of loss, or—to put it in words of Sviatoslav Grigoriev, the chair of the Department of Sociology at the Altai State University, and the main proponent of the sociological theory of vital forces—the "situation of castration (*situatsia kastratsii*) of the Russian national self-awareness (*samosoznanie*) and the Russian culture" has stopped—however temporarily—the "endless movement of symbolization,"[27] and becomes a starting point for narrating not just the traumatic past but also the future of the "Russian *etnos*."

What are the major discursive moves that made possible this translation of stories about "horrifying grief and misery" into an analysis of the *etnos*' vitality? How does this particular "system of marks," as Derrida calls it in his paper on racism, outline "space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders"?[28] In other words, how does the "situation of castration" help to organize a community? In the rest of my essay, I show how this version of *ethnovitalism* managed to use the organismic language to construct a bigger picture of the nation, the country, and the world. I suggest that ethnovitalism provided a necessary framework, a useful combination of the physico-mechanical and the teleological principles that could render dramatic changes meaningful, and to articulate a *post*traumatic vision of the Russian national identity.

In the 1990s the "Altai sociological school of vital forces," as this intellectual movement is often called, emerged as a network of educational institutions and publications, with the Faculty of Sociology, Psychology, and Social Work at the Altai State University as its administrative and intellectual core. The influence of this academic ethnovitalism is not limited to the Altai region only. The school (both, the movement and the faculty) is recognized nationally, and is increasingly cited in the national academic journals as an example of a growing field of the "sociology of life."[29]

In spite of dozens of monographs, collected volumes, textbooks, educational standards, and conference proceedings published by the faculty, it is not that easy to grasp the actual theoretical and practical content of its conceptual apparatus. Predominantly, texts have little factual material. Most of them are written in a genre of academic "reflection" upon a theoretical or methodological issue. Articles tend to be structured self-referentially, with few oft-recurring "foundational" passages and definitions used to justify

rather than to explain the usage or the content of key terms and ideas of the vitalist sociology.

In 1999, in a "foundational" text, which Grigoriev coauthored with Yurii Rastov, a senior sociologist of the Faculty, the scholars outlined retrospectively their epistemological evolution. Citing their own studies of migration and employment patterns carried in the 1970s as a source for their later generalizations, the sociologists postulated that "each subject of social life has in his or her possession a different set of potentialities of subjecthood (*nabory potentsii sub''ektnosti*)." As the sociologists observed, the practical realization of these potentialities depends on three major elements: particular "features of the social space" (*sotsial'noe prostratnstvo*), the subject's "ability to comprehend" these features adequately, and a "system of factors called vital forces."[30] One's ability to purposefully utilize vital forces indicates the level of subjecthood of the individual or a group.[31]

This "subjecthood" should not be mistaken for an outcome of the Foucauldian subjection, though. The vitalist subjecthood has nothing to do with subject positions—discursive or otherwise—that an individual or a group assume in order to address others and become addressable themselves. In the absence of a Russian language equivalent for the English "*agency*," the subjecthood of ethnovitalism is understood first if all as an essentialist entity, "the self-ness" (*samost'*) that gradually unfolds itself in time and space, as I was reminded in conversations with Altai scholars.

Regardless of its exact content, the ethnovitalist subjecthood did help to shift the accent of sociological studies from "lifeless" analyses of relations of production to the "human-centeredness" and "culture-centeredness" (*chelovekotsentrichnost'*, *kul'turotsentrichnost'*) of individual and group interactions. In other words, "subjecthood" was instrumental in going beyond the traditional limits of the "dialectical relations" between base and superstructure, firmly established in Soviet-style social analysis.[32] Later, the primary analytic focus was moved from the subjecthood to "vital forces" that actually help to make the subjecthood real.[33] Yet, as Altai vitalists often stress, the analytical task of the category of "vital forces" is far from discovering or even describing some hidden essence of the human being. "Vital forces" is a sociological rather than a philosophical category; hence, its main purpose is to help understand the real existence of the "individual or collective subject of life-implementation" realized in actual space and time.[34]

The major impetus for developing the concept of "human vital forces" came from yet another sociological study realized by a group of Altai sociologists in the early 1990s. The study traced regional consequences of the nuclear test explosions conducted in the neighboring Semipalatinsk region (Kazakhstan) in 1949 to 1962.[35] Detrimental impact of the tests was certainly known to the Soviet officials and local population, yet until perestroika there was neither discussion of this case, nor social help to the

people who suffered from these explosions. The sociological project was a part of the general policy of openness started by Gorbachev in the late 1980s; and it was meant to provide the government with practical recommendations able to minimize "negative social consequences of the [Semipalatinsk] tragedy."[36] In their report symptomatically titled *A Sociologist in the Region of an Ecological Trouble*, two prominent members of the Faculty concluded in 1994 that along with "obvious manifestations of genetic instability among the offspring" of those who have experienced the influence of the explosions in 1949 to 1962, there also was "multiple and diverse decrease of the vital capacity (*zhiznestoikost'*)" of the cohorts in question; the population at large was "negatively affected."[37]

The traumatic origin of the Altai vitalism is important, as is the original combination of issues of environmental disaster, health and political responsibility, on which the project was based. By the end of the 1990s, the traumatic foundation of the concept was generalized; references to a specific politico-environmental disaster were replaced by a version of the "Russian tragedy." Traumatic experience acquired the force of an intellectual matrix and became an effective interpretative and narrative device. To quote Grigoriev:

> The transformation of the general order (*uklad*) of social life, mass alcoholism (*alkogolizatsiia*), criminalization of the daily life and governmental sphere, living standards below the sustenance level—all that provoked illnesses, increased mortality, and decreased life-expectancy among all native people of Russia. . . . This situation not only brings up questions of the national and state security of Russia, but also [it points toward] the numerical decrease of the state-forming *etnos* (*gosudarstvoobrazuiushchii etnos*)—i.e., Russians and other native peoples—in the national-cultural community [of the country].[38]

Significantly, in the process of this generalizing shift, the split between the nation and the state, so typical for the late Soviet theories of ethnicity, was somewhat overcome. The state emerged as a direct continuation of *etnos* or, perhaps even more importantly, as a primary condition for the *etnos*'s survival. No longer construed as a contested apparatus of class power, the state was seen as "the ethnopolitical status of the people," and "a form of vital activity (*zhiznedeiatelnost'*) of the 'social body' of culture."[39] The state was part and parcel of the "ethnic milieu"; it was an element of the surrounding landscape, a biopolitical institution that helped to maintain "the vital forces of national communities."[40]

Within the framework of ethnovitalism, "survival" of the Russian *etnos* was no longer constructed only as an issue of significant cultural and historical proportions. It also became a matter of the "socioecological" security of the state and the nation,[41] a burning question of "personal and ethnic ecology" (*ekologiia lichnosti i etnosa*).[42] Correspondingly, the main task of the

"nonclassical" sociology of vital forces, then, was no less but "creation of theory and practice of the civilization of the managed socio-natural (*sotsio-prirodnaya*) evolution."[43]

As anthropology of science has demonstrated, such intertwining of biological metaphors and sociological analysis often reflects the emerging character of a new discipline. For instance, in her study of American immunology, Emily Martin showed how the vocabulary of the new field of research was created largely through borrowing images and metaphors of the nation-state: "As immunology describes it, bodies are imperiled nations continuously at war to quell alien invaders. These nations have sharply defined borders in space, which are constantly besieged and threatened."[44] For Martin, the popularity of this somatic nationalism has to do with two major reasons. A lack of a developed analytic language in the new discipline forced scholars to look for ready-made tropes and interpretative tools elsewhere. At the same time, the familiarity and metaphorical imperceptibility of traditional images of the nation-state turn the language of the "state war" into a discursive default, a termilogical prosthesis ready to fill in the symbolic vacuum. What is crucial in such borrowings, as Martin suggests, is the ideological work that this imagery does: violence is inscribed in the very core of the daily life, is envisioned as a part of the body's function.[45] As I have been suggesting, though, the attractiveness of the somatic nationalism is not determined by the all permeating nation-state discourse only. By naturalizing the nonorganic or the social, somatic tropes also turn the organismic logic into a self-sustaining and perpetually unfolding narrative device: the organic organization of the *etnos* is construed as the way of ethnic being and as the primary purpose of its existence.

Even though terminological borrowings of Altai ethnovitalists were caused by the insufficiency of their professional language not dissimilar from the case described by Martin, the logic of their borrowings was reversed. In this case, society and sociology were expressed in naturalized terms. Yet the general direction of this somatic nationalism remained intact: images of health and illness became dominant, and the academic project was increasingly construed as a corrective discipline. Grigoriev even published a text that clearly pointed toward the functional task of the emerging theory. As the sociologist maintained, there was a need to institute "social therapy" as a new branch of contemporary social knowledge in order to highlight the fact that "social subjects with structural and functional anomalies" have essential specificities in their functioning and development.[46] The new field of academic social therapy still has to pass through the period of its infancy; a therapeutic function, however, clearly underlies the "vitalist sociology" as a whole.

The generalization of traumatic experience also modified the construction of the agent of this experience. Original "*demographic* groups" (i.e.,

"victims of radioactive exposure") evolved into "*national* groups" and "*national-ethnic* communities."[47] Statistical *populations* were turned back into ethnic *peoples*, to reverse and rephrase Agamben.[48] Correspondingly, the basic category of "vital forces" (*zhiznennye sily*) was supplemented by its spatial counterpart—the category of the "vital environment" (*zhiznennoe prostranstvo*). The categorical production logically took later the shape of "culture-vitalism" (*kulturvitalism*), a peculiar amalgam of organic metaphors and cultural categories that brought together the biological, the ethnic, and the territorial.

## THE VITAL SPACE FOR ORGANIC CULTURE

There are three major elements that interest me in this intellectualized vision of post-Soviet ethnicities: the formation of vital forces; the role of space in shaping these forces; and the ethnic specificity of Slavic vitality.

Within the "nonclassical vitalism" of Altai sociologists, the specific origin of "vital forces" is not exactly clear, just like it was within the more classical European vitalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[49] Many ethnovitalists are busy exploring various aspects of "energy exchange" between nature and human beings. Different types of energy, it is said, are absorbed from nature through the senses, and then transformed and accumulated as "psycho-energetic systems" in the nervous system and brains.[50] Others talk about *Homo vivens,* "a bio-psycho-social being (*biopsikhosotsialnoe sushchestvo*) with inherent (*prisushchie*) physical, psychic, and social forces as a source of this being's life." The expenditure and recuperation of these forces, their integration and splitting, their loss and their accumulation is the "essence of the biopsychosocial life of humans."[51] As a particular example, Yurii Rastov, a sociologist of conflict, cites his study of "poor categories [of people] in cities and villages" who, despite their objectively bad living conditions, are not inclined to protest. As he concludes, the reason of this incoherence has to do with the "predominance of physically and psychically defective (*ushcherbnykh*) people" among these categories. "It is impossible to multiple forces when one has none."[52]

In Grigoriev's own work, social racism that equates possession with access and, conversely, dispossession with degeneration, acquired a somewhat different form.[53] It was not the "*inherent*" life sources that become problematic for the scholar. Rather it is the preservation of a particular place-of-development, it is the securing of the unique configuration of vital forces that were shaped by each "national-ethnic community" (*natsionalno-etnicheskaiia obshchnost*) in the process of a very particular "interaction with the vital environment, habitat, and the means of livelihood (*sredstva k zhizni*)."[54] Importantly, Grigoriev emphasized the ethnic specificity of

this formative role of space; citing "the history of the Slavic *etnos*" as his evidence, he insisted that the key organizing institute traditionally was not based on relations defined by blood or kinship. Rather, it was the *territorial* community (*obshchina*) that sustained the viability of the *etnos*.[55] Successful history of a particular national-ethnic community is envisioned as a result of a proper positioning of the "community" vis-à-vis other *etnoses*. In turn, the ethnic habitat, the "vital environment," along with landscape also includes a politically organized space. Ethnovitalism proposes a list of "indicators" that allow anyone to monitor the levels of vital forces of different national communities within the state. Among the most important, Grigoriev, for instance, lists (1) distribution of different "national-ethnic communities" across the professional field; (2) levels of formal education and qualification; (3) relative place within the "socio-hierarchical system of social governance"; (4) property qualifications; (5) territorial distribution; (6) demographic profile; and (7) health profile.[56] As Grigoriev comments, "Domination by a certain nationality (*natsionalnost'*) in the most qualified layer of a particular professional group is extremely important for increasing both the scope of its influence in society and the range of its possibilities for developing and defending their vital forces."[57]

Pointing to particular examples of such dominance, some sociologists increasingly frame it as "ethnoentrepreneurship" (*etnopredprinimatel'stvo*),[58] which could potentially lead to "ethnocracy" (*etnokratiia*), that is, a political domination of an *etnos* (or a part of it) in a multiethnic society.[59] The situation might become especially serious, when such political, professional, financial or informational dominance is achieved by ethnic groups that have their own nation-states outside Russia.[60] To quote Grigoriev:

> Could anyone call the situation that we have now normal, after the barbaric—or was it just very flexible?—anti-Russian privatization, when 70% of the country's economy and finances are controlled by the Jewish national minority? The World Jewish Congress freely conducts its events in Russia, while national and patriotic organizations of the Russians are barely allowed to drag out their miserable existence.[61]

The vital environment, in other words, is turned into an area, where circulation of goods, capital, and labor is overshadowed by circulation of *etnoses*. Inability to restraint the circulation of (unwanted) *etnoses* within a traditional ethnic milieu raises a question about "control over property and power" that Russians lost.[62] In this situation, when "vital energy (*passionarnost*) in Slavic countries is declining," as Grigoriev puts it, studies of vital forces of Slavic people are of strategic importance.[63]

This strategic importance is often realized by projecting the terminology of genetics onto cultural history and the present. Metaphors of "cultural genotype," a "genetic social code of culture," and the "genome of culture"[64]

create a discursive field in which culture, as Tamara Semilet recently put it, is understood as "an organic system . . . which is born and sustained only as an ethno-national formation."[65] Culture is ethnoviviparous by definition, that is, it is conceived, nourished and developed only inside of the *etnos*'s body. As she stressed, "The function of culture-bearing (*kul'turorodnaiia*) is a monopoly of *etnoses*, peoples, and nations. Any organic culture is a national culture." *Etnos*, then, is both "source and substrate (*substrat*)" of vital forces of culture; it is "the subject of culture-creation (*kul'turotvorchestvo*)."[66]

The vocabulary of sociogenetics helped to modify the understanding of the "vital environment." Metaphors of culture-as-organism delineate everything that could "violate the integrity" of the ethnic vital forces, "suppress energy," or "change the essence" of the *etnos*.[67] Trauma-stories of the Russian tragedy were finally relocated within the context of national security.

In her book on *Culture-Vitalism*, published in 2003 by Altai State, Semilet outlined the problem of "national cultural security" (*natsional'naia kul'turnaia bezopasnost'*) and provided a list of "threats to the vital forces." The list, in fact, succinctly summarizes grievances about the current state of Russian culture frequently voiced in the mass media. *External* dangers to national culture, for instance, include: foreign language domination (*inoiazychnoe zasile*); foreign religions (*chuzhdye religii*); foreign-born (*inorodnye*) ideals and standards; outside attempts to dominate the internal political life of the country; radical modifications of patterns of social ties and interaction; imposition of "cultural inferiority complex" and the "apathy of despair."[68] The "mutual pressure" of *etnoses* reappears as cultural intrusion, where "ethnosphere" becomes an arena of global "competition of *etnoses* (*konkurentsiia etnosov*)," which turns "vital environment" of each *etnos* into a target of "geopolitical strategies" of globalization.[69]

These "strategies" do not escape the touch of historicizing called upon to demonstrate the diminishing of the vital space of the Russian culture. During the conference on "Vital Forces of Slavic People on the Verge of Centuries and Worldviews: Multifacetedness of the Problem," organized in December 2000 by the faculty, presenters listed multiple facts and evidence that could easily be summed up in the following quote: "On average, from the times of Ivan the Terrible until the middle of the XIX century, our country's territory was increasing daily by one square kilometer. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russia entered a process of slow shrinking. Back then it occupied ⅕ of the world' land surface; now it can barely claim ⅐ of it."[70]

In more up-to-date versions of a similar narrative, "*etnoses* of the G-7," often referred to as the "gold billion" (*zolotoi milliard*), are portrayed as being deeply invested in reducing "the Russian, and predominantly Slavic, population to 40–50 millions"[71] to be used as a cheap labor force in order to "serve the interests of the world capital-elite" (*kapitaloelita*), with Russia

itself to become a deindustrialized country with no control over its natural resources.[72]

It is in this combination of issues of security, ethnicity, and territory that the 1920s ideas about the importance of the specifically Eurasian location of Russia become essential again. As some ethnovitalists like to claim, historically "Russia-Eurasia" was located *between* the East and the West, occupying simultaneously "the middle and 'the heart'" (*sredinno-"serdechnoe" polozhenie*). The vital position determines Russia's role of "cultural mediator" between different cultural poles, and "synthesizer" of different cultural logics.[73] Hence, the collapse of Russia would not be just a problem of the Russian or even Slavic *etnoses*:

> As the Eurasian civilization, Russia is the center of world stability and instability. If the mondialist strategic plan to confederate Russia were to succeed . . . instability would settle here. The West and the East would clash; China would make a geopolitical shift towards Siberia. Germany would "shift" towards the East; the Islamist fundamentalism would also "shift" along the axis of the Volga-river–the North Caucasus–Kazakhstan. A geopolitical havoc (*smuta*) of grand proportions is to happen, then. And humanity would hardly succeed in getting out of it, because "portable nuclear bombs," not to mention other weapons of mass destruction, have become a reality these days.[74]

To stop a potential worldwide catastrophe, as Grigoriev and Subetto recently suggested, one needs to understand that the model of personality developed throughout the course of the Russian history is "opposite to the liberal" model.[75] The primacy of collectivity and congregationality (*sobornost'*), unity of the individual, society, and the state, claimed to be so typical for the Russians, are seen as a product of a particular Eurasian location, with its specific climate and its extensive landscape. Survival and preservation of the Russian "society-organism" (*obshetsvo-organizm*) can begin with introducing an "ecology of the Russian people" (*ekologiia russkogo naroda*), with developing a study of "social virology" (*sotsialnaia virusologiia*) as a "special scientific field" that could explore and prevent a "special type of 'socio-psychological war' aimed to destroy the backbone of the ethnos' social memory, its basic value system, and its worldview paradigms."[76]

With its biopsychosocial ethnic body, its organic culture, and its rhetorical "violence in the name of the vital," as the anthropologist James Faubion calls it,[77] administrative and academic success of the vital sociology is a symptomatic example of the process through which communities are imagined and institutionalized in contemporary Russia. To some degree, the examples that I have discussed can be seen as an experimental situation of sorts: a group of scholars with a background in social sciences and humanities, with extensive experience of international academic travel

and with access (however limited) to world literature, was set to create a new framework for their sociological data. Starting from scratch, without institutional or intellectual support/constraints of the discipline, the school of "vital forces" in a short time managed to consolidate people and financial resources around the persistent production of quasi-academic narratives, which are structured by a repetitive operation of ethnic division. By breaking "a population" into distinctive groups, by "separating out" some groups,[78] these xenophobic discourses of ethnic difference create a traditional effect of intelligibility when dealing with the nation's history. But along with "distinctive" groups, the biopolitics of the "Russian tragedy" also splits off the issues of responsibility for painful and tragic instances in the recent national past.

The traumatic origin of vital forces, the therapeutic function of ethnovitalist narratives, the underlying striving to create a protective discursive shield of ethnic cohesion cannot, however, hide the main logical flaw of this construction. "Social therapy" of this vitalism can sustain itself only through securing a constant production of objects-symptoms for its own application: from the "situation of castration" of the Russian culture to "viral infection" of the ethnos' backbone; from "global competition of ethnoses" to the "broken genetic code" of the national culture.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Nicholas Jardine, *The Science of Inquiry: On the Reality of Questions in the Sciences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 25. In his *Essay on Generation*, Blumenbach caustically rendered the main argument of this approach: "According to this theory we, and indeed all the children of Adam, were at one time *ipso facto*, pent up in the two ovaria of our common mother Eve. There we lay, as it were asleep, and although astonishing little creatures, yet completely organized bodies, and perfect miniatures of the form we have since assumed." J. F. Blumenbach, *An Essay on Generation* (London: printed for T. Cadell; Faulder; Murray; and Creech, Edinburgh, 1792), 13.

2. See Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 143–71.

3. Blumenbach, *Essay on Generation*, 20.

4. See J. F. Blumenbach, *A Manual of the Elements of Natural History* (London: printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1825), 11.

5. See James Larson, "Vital Forces: Regulative Principle or Constitutive Agens? A Strategy in German Physiology, 1786–1802," *Isis* 70 (1979): 237.

6. See Timothy Lenoir, "Kant, Blumenbach, and Vital Materialism in German Biology," *ISIS* 71 (1980): 84.

7. Jardine, *Science of Inquiry*, 25–27; Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 54–56.

8. L. Richmond Wheeler, *Vitalism: Its History and Validity* (London: H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., 1939).

9. As quoted: Lenoir, "Kant, Blumenbach, and Vital Materialism," 79–80.

10. For example, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (London: Collier Macmillan Publisher, 1951), 274.

11. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 222.

12. See Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 88.

13. Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 2.

14. For a discussion see, for example, A. S. Panarin, *Rossiiskaia intelligentsiia v mirovykh voinakh i revolutsiiakh XX veka* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1998); Tatiana Kniazevskaya, ed., *Russkaia intelligentsiia: Istoriia i sud'ba* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999); Andrei Zdravomyslov, *Sotsiologiia rossiiskogo krizisa* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999).

15. A. V. Maltseva, "Tsennosti obrazovaniia kak faktory natsional'nogo razvitiia," in Tamara Semilet, *Russkoe sotsiokulturnoe prostranstvo: Dukhovnye konstanty i sotsialnye tekhnologii* (Barnaul: The Altai State University Press, 2004), 240.

16. See, for example, Galina Popova, "Russkii krest," *Altaiskaia Pravda*, January 22, 2003. See also Tatiana Bateneva, "'Russkii krest' nyzhno popravit'," *Izvestiia*, May 17, 2003.

17. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 84.

18. There are, of course, some exceptions to this rule; see, for example, Gavriil Popov, "Beregite russkikh. Razgovory o 'rossiianakh'—popytka uiti ot problemy," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, May 4, 2000; for a review see Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "Staraia ideologiia novoi sem'i: Demograficheskii natsionalism Rossii i Ukrainy," in *Semeinye uzy: modeli dlia sborki*, ed. Serguei Oushakine (Moscow: NLO Press, 2004), 1:268–96.

19. See Tamara Elizar'eva, "Russkii krest," *Vechernii Barnaul*, November 22, 2002.

20. Popov, "Russkii kholokost . . . ."

21. Galina Popova, "Skol'ko nas? Gde my zhivem? Predvaritel'nye itogi perepisi," *Altaiskaia Pravda*, July 17, 2003.

22. Aleksandr Prokhozhev, *Tenevoi narod (k istorii evreev v Rossii)* (Barnaul, Russ., 2002), 255.

23. See, for example, Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 206; see also Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 8.

24. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 8.

25. See Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 303.

26. See also John Marks, *Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity* (London: Pluto Press, 1998); Keith Ansel Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 1999).

27. Lacan, "Subversion of the Subject," 303.

28. Jacques Derrida, "Racism's Last Word," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 292.

29. See, for example, Vladimir Bolgov, "Sotsiologicheskii analiz novykh form sotsiokulturnoi zhizni," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia* 2 (2003): 28–39; Gennadii Dalnov and Valdimir Klimov, "Ob osnovnom poniatii 'sotsiologia zhizni,'" *Sotsio-*

*logicheskie Issledovaniia* 4 (2003): 12–19; Leonid Guzalenko, "Nuzhna li sotsiologii zhizni zhivaia lichnost?" *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia* 10 (2003): 3–13; V. G. Nemirovskii and D. D. Nevirko, "Regional'nye sotsiologicheskie shkoly na poroge XXI veka," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia* 9 (2002): 135–5; Yurii Reznik, "Sotsiologiia zhizni kak novoe napravlenie mezhdistiplinarnykh issledovanii," *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia* 9 (2000): 3–12.

30. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Yurii Rastov, "Sovremennaia istoriia formirovaniia sotsiologicheskoi kontseptsii zhiznennykh sil cheloveka," in *Sovremennoe obshchestvo i lichnost v sotsiologii zhiznennykh sil cheloveka*, vol. 1, *Zhiznennye sily cheloveka: Osnovy formirovaniia sotsiologicheskoi kontseptsii*, ed. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Ludmila Demina (Barnaul, Russ.: Izd-vo APNTs SO RAO, 1999), 8.

31. See S. Grigoriev and E. Starikova, "Konsteptsiia zhiznennykh sil kak teoreticheskoe osnovanie sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia problem spravedlivosti," in *Kul'turologiia razvitiia rossiiskogo universiteta* (Barnaul, Russ., 2003), 195.

32. Grigoriev, *Kul'turologiia razvitiia rossiiskogo universiteta*, 79.

33. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Aleksandr Subetto, *Osnovy neklassicheskoi sotsiologii* (Barnaul, Russ.: ARNTs SO RAN, 2000), 91.

34. See Grigoriev and Subetto, *Osnovy neklassicheskoi sotsiologii*, 103.

35. During these years, Semipalatinsk was used as the main site for testing nuclear bombs above and under ground. For more than decade, the population in Altai was exposed to the flow of radiation from the testing ground.

36. Grigoriev and Rastov, "Sovremennaia istoriia formirovaniia," 11.

37. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Ludmila Demina, *Sotsiolog v raoine ekologicheskogo neblagopoluchiia: Kontseptsiia, programma, oput podgotovki* (Barnaul, Russ.: Altaiskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1994), 15.

38. Sviatoslav Grigoriev, "Teoretiko-metodologicheskie osnovy i aktual'nost analiza zhiznennykh sil natsional'nykh obshchnostei v Rossii 1990-kh gg.," in *Sovremennoe obshestvo i lichnost' v sotsiologii zhiznenny'kh sil cheloveka*, ed. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Ludmila Demina (Barnaul, Russ.: Izd-vo APNTs SO RAO, 1999), 1:36.

39. Tamara Semilet, "Teoretiko-metodologicheskie osnovaniia kul'turvitalistskoi kontseptsii v sotsiologii," in *Neklassicheskaia sotsiologiia v sovremennoi Rossii*, ed. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Ludmila Gusliakova (Moscow and Barnaul, Russ.: ARNTs SO RAO, 2003), 71.

40. Grigoriev, "Teoretiko-metodologicheskie osnovy i aktualnost analiza," 42.

41. Grigoriev, *Kul'turologiia razvitiia rossiiskogo universiteta*, 183–82.

42. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Aleksandr Subetto, "Kul'turotsentrichnost' ekologii lichnosti i etnosa v sisteme obrazovaniia kak problema sotsialnoi virusologii: Kontekst analiza v vitalistskoi sotsiologii," *Sibirskii Sotsiologicheskii Vestnik* 1 (2003): 101–7.

43. Sviatoslav Grigoriev, *Iskry sokrovennogo* (Barnaul, Russ.: OAO APK, 2000), 131.

44. Emily Martin, "Toward an Anthropology of Immunology: The Body as Nation State," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1990): 421.

45. Martin, "Toward an Anthropology of Immunology," 417.

46. Grigoriev, *Iskry sokrovennogo*, 134.

47. Grigoriev, "Teoretiko-metodologicheskie osnovy," 42.

48. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 84.

49. See Wheeler, *Vitalism*; Guido Cimino and Francois Dushesneau, eds., *Vitalisms from Haller to the Cell Theory* (Florence: Olschki, 1997).

50. Mikhail Bobrov, "Zhiznennye sily cheloveka (problema vzaimodeistviia sostavliaushchikh)," in Grigoriev and Demina, *Sovremennoe ponimanie zhiznennykh sil*, 56; see also Svetlana Soboleva, ed., "Faktory ustoichivosti malykh natsional'nykh grupp," *Teoretiko-metodologicheskie i prikladnye voprosy issledovanii* (Novosibirsk, Russ.: IEiOPP SO RAN, 2000).

51. Yurii Rastov, "Versii neovitalistskogo teoretizirovaniia v sovremennoi rossiiskoi sotsiologii," in Grigoriev and Gusliakova, *Neklassicheskaia sotsiologiia*, 99.

52. Rastov, "Versii neovitalistskogo teoretizirovaniia," 100.

53. For more on latent and direct racism in post-Soviet social sciences, see Viktor Voronkov, Oksana Karpenko, and Aleksandr Osipov, eds., *Rasizm v iazyke sotsial'nykh nauk* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2002).

54. Sviatoslav Grigoriev, "Analiz rossiiskikh natsional'nykh obshnostei na rubezhe vekov s pozitsii zhiznennykh sil cheloveka i obshchestva," in Grigoriev and Demina, *Sovremennoe ponimanie zhiznennykh sil*, 47.

55. Sviatoslav Grigoriev, *Vitalistskaia sotsiologiia: Paradigma nastoiashchego i budushchego (izbrannye stat'i po neklassicheskoi sotsiologii)* (Barnaul, Russ.: Izd-vo APNTs SO RAO, 2001), 121.

56. Grigoriev, "Analiz rossiiskikh natsional'nykh obshchnostei," 47.

57. Grigoriev, "Analiz rossiiskikh natsional'nykh obshchnostei," 49.

58. Zhan Toshchenko, "Ekonomicheskii natsionalism," *Obshestvo i ekonomika* 1 (2002): 114–33; see also S. Barsukova, "Vynuzhdennoe doverie setevogo mira," *Polis* 2 (2001): 52–60.

59. Zhan Toshchenko, *Etnokratiia: Teoriia i sovremennost' (sotsiologicheskie ocherki)* (Moscow: ROSPENN, 2003), 58.

60. Sviatoslav Grigoriev, "Sovpadenie sotsial'no-klassovoi i natsional'no-etnicheskoi differentsiatsii naseleniia kak faktor i uslovie formirovaniia ideologii konsolidatsii rossiiskogo obshchestva rubezha XX–XXI vekov, obespecheniia ego sotsial'noi bezopasnosti," in *Formirovanie ideologii konsolidatsii rossiiskogo obshchestva*, ed. Sviatoslav Grigoriev (Barnaul, Russ.: SPS, 2004), 57.

61. Grigoriev, *Iskry sokrovennogo*, 49.

62. Grigoriev, "Sovpadenie sotsial'no-klassovoi i natsional'no-etnicheskoi differentsiatsii," 57.

63. Grigoriev, *Iskry sokrovennogo*, 299.

64. Maltseva, "Tsennosti obrazovaniia," 240; Semilet, *Kul'turvitalism—kontsepstiia zhiznennykh sil*, 6, 54.

65. Semilet, *Kul'turvitalism—kontseptsiia zhiznennykh sil*, 51.

66. Semilet, *Kul'turvitalism—kontseptsiia zhiznennykh sil*, 51–52.

67. Semilet, *Kul'turvitalism—kontseptsiia zhiznennykh sil*, 63–64.

68. Semilet, *Kul'turvitalism—kontseptsiia zhiznennykh sil*, 63–64.

69. Konstantin Koltakov and Igor Moskvichev, "Etnicheskaia paradigma i konkurentsiia etnosov kak storona global'nogo mirovogo krizisa," in *Zhiznennye sily slavianstva na rubezhe vekov i mirovozzrenii. Materialy mezhdunarodnogo kongressa*, part 1, ed. Tamara Semilet (Barnaul, Russ.: NP, 2001), 134–40.

70. N. D. Rastov, "Geopolitika i bezopasnost Rossii," in Semilet, *Zhiznennye sily slavianstva*, 38.

71. Moskvichev Koltakov, "Etnicheskaia paradigma i konkurentsiia etnosov," 136.

72. Aleksandr Subetto, "Ideia kommunizma v XXI veke," Semilet, *Zhiznennye sily slavianstva*, 63.

73. A. V. Ivanov, "Sovremennoe zvuchanie evraziistva: Rol' i znachenie russkoi kul'tury v polikul'turnom prostranstve kontinenta," in Semilet, *Zhiznennye sily russkoi kul'tury*, 281; see also Grigoriev, *Iskry sokrovennogo*, 99–100.

74. Aleksandr Subetto, "Patrioticheskoe soznanie nachinaetsia s ponimaniia istorii svoei strany, svoego naroda," in *Dukhovnoe i sotsial'noe razvitie Rossii 1990-kh.: Problema sokhraneniia zhiznennykh sil russkogo naroda*, ed. Sviatoslav Grigoriev and Tamara Semilet (Barnaul, Russ.: School of Sociology, Altai State University, 1999), 12.

75. Grigoriev and Subetto, "Kul'turotsentrichnost' ekologii lichnosti," 105.

76. Grigoriev and Subetto, "Kul'turotsentrichnost' ekologii lichnosti," 101–2.

77. James D. Faubion, "Religion, Violence and the Vitalistic Economy," *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2003): 78.

78. Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," *Lectures at the College de France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 255.

# 9

# Balkanism and Postcolonialism, or On the Beauty of the Airplane View

*Maria Todorova*

A day before the death of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak wrote the preface to the Serbian translation of her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. She subsequently published this brief preface in English as *In Memoriam* dedicated to her "friend and ally, the founder of post-colonial studies, Edward Said."[1] Already the opening phrase of this preface establishes a powerful and uncanny link between balkanism and postcolonialism: "The translation of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* into Serbian is an instructive event for me. The relationship of postcolonial theory to the Balkan as metaphor is a critical task for our world."[2] In his response to Spivak, Obrad Savić, translator of her work and acting president of the Belgrade Circle, wrote that with the passing of Said, the "great 'burden' of spreading postcolonial theory has now fallen on your back. What I can promise at this moment is that you can always count on complete and unconditional support from your friends in and around the Belgrade Circle. We are small, but we never let go!"[3]

It was this emotional pledge and categorical assertion of a correlation between the two notions, as well as my earlier stated reluctance to link them together that prompted Dušan Bjelić, professor of criminology at the University of Southern Maine and another prominent member of the Belgrade Circle, to organize a panel at the annual convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities in 2004, which was to address the relationship between these two categories. In the following text, which is an expanded and revised version of my talk at the panel, I would like to address two broad issues: first, the meeting points (if any) between the categories and phenomena of *balkanism* and *postcolonialism*; and second, the appropriateness or utility of approaching balkanism from a postcolonial

perspective. Simply put: are there intersections between balkanism and postcolonialism and if so, are they productive? In a broader framework, the text addresses the problem (literally) of the insatiable hunger for a new grand social theory (even after the immediate demise of a previous one) that would supposedly provide the guidelines for a unified approach. In this sense it is a rejoinder to the challenge articulated in the Introduction to the present volume—the call to take a closer look at the "collective efforts of self-reinvention and re-positioning in history" that have accompanied the postcommunist era.

When I started work on *Imagining the Balkans*, whose initial working title was "Balkanism," I found to my surprise and delight that *balkanism* was an uninhabited category, something exceptionally rare in humanities. I have no claim to have coined it (so in that sense it is not a neologism) but the only person who had employed it before was an obscure early twentieth-century author who had used it (in its plural form as *balkanisms*) as a synonym for the pejorative attributes of the Balkans as a region. Its sister derivative, on the other hand, *balkanization*, as a synonym for meaningless fragmentation, since it initial use in the 1920s, has become so much a byword that it was completely dissociated from its original context and we can hear it today, inter alia, as an explanation for the dysfunction of the American counterintelligence: it is because the CIA and the FBI, we are told, have been balkanized, that surprise attacks like 9/11 could be effectuated.

This happy circumstance allowed me to use the designator *balkanism*, which rhymed neatly with *orientalism*, as both its mirror and foil, in a word, it allowed me at the same time to both pay homage to Edward Said and try to argue for a substantive difference between the two categories and phenomena.[4] To put it succinctly, *balkanism* expresses the idea that explanatory approaches to phenomena in Southeastern Europe, that is, the Balkans, often rest upon a discourse (in the Foucauldian sense) or a stable system of stereotypes (for the ones who shun the notion of "discourse"), which place the Balkans in a cognitive straightjacket.[5] I also argued for the historicity of balkanism, which as a discourse was shaped only in the early decades of the twentieth century, but whose genealogy steps on patterns of representation from the sixteenth century onward. I thus insisted on the historical grounding of balkanism in the Ottoman period, when the name *Balkan* entered the peninsula. Arguably, in some aspects the balkanist discourse stepped on motives from previous centuries, but not much earlier than the eleventh-century schism between the churches of Rome and Constantinople, and these were not specifically about the Balkan region, but about Orthodoxy and the Byzantine commonwealth, to use Obolensky's apt phrase.

There are thus obvious similarities between balkanism and orientalism. First and foremost, they belong to the same species: a discursive formation. Yet, the main difference between them that I posited was the geographic

and historical concreteness of the Balkans unlike the traveling and mostly metaphorical and symbolic nature of the Orient. This is not to say that the Balkans cannot serve as a metaphor; quite to the contrary. The *Balkans* have a number of different incarnations or manifestations which can be roughly grouped into four categories. At its simplest, Balkan is a *name*: initially, the name of a mountain, used increasingly since the fifteenth century when it first appeared. Then, since the nineteenth century, it began to be applied to the peninsula as a whole, and thus became the name of a region. Finally, it is used also as a personal name (a family name in Bulgaria, and a given name in Turkey). Secondly, Balkans is used as a *metaphor* and this is the function that makes it resonate with orientalism. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it became a pejorative, although this was only a gradual process, triggered by the events accompanying the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of small, weak, economically backward, and dependent nation-states, striving to modernize. The difficulties of this modernization process and the accompanying excesses of nationalism created a situation in which the Balkans began to serve as a symbol for the aggressive, intolerant, barbarian, semi-developed, semi-civilized, semi-oriental. It is this metaphor and its present utilization in the real world of politics that I addressed and criticized in *Imagining the Balkans*, and argued that a specific discourse which I called *balkanism* shapes attitudes and actions toward the Balkans. If there is a tentative connection to postcolonial theory, it is with this aspect of the Balkans, and Spivak is correct in carefully linking it only to the Balkan as metaphor.[6] Thirdly, unlike the Orient, the Balkans can be addressed as a scholarly category of analysis—a concrete geographic *region*—and in this capacity, and in the present, it is most often used as a synonym of Southeastern Europe. Finally, the Balkans can be approached and interpreted through the notion of *historical legacy*, something to which I will come back.

As already said, balkanism's discursive character pairs it naturally with orientalism. One of the many distinctions on which I insisted (others being question of race, color, religion, language, gender, etc.) was the lack of a colonial predicament for the Balkans, something which will be at the center of my present argument too.[7] The most important consequence of the above discussion, however, is what I perceive as the pull of the other—nonmetaphoric—but essential aspects of the Balkans, which challenge the scholar to deal with the ontology of the Balkans, rather than simply with its metaphoric functions.

In a way Said's orientalism, too, was, at bottom, a very concrete historically inspired discussion: it was the Palestinian predicament in the era of late imperialism. However, it was clad in such a generalizing discourse that it proved to be translatable and became metaphorically appropriate for designating the postcolonial as a whole. And I would submit that, among others,

the circumstance that allowed Said to do so was the elastic nature of the Orient. Granted, one could also add the authors' different approaches: "orientalism" exposed by a literary critic, "balkanism" analyzed by a historian. And here we can already see the first methodological distinction (albeit not necessarily incompatible): one, an essentially historical approach and interpretation; the other structuralist (or, rather, poststructuralist) theory.[8]

Postcolonial studies have an established epistemological pedigree in poststructuralist theory, as well as a very concrete provenance in the work of subalternist historians of South Asia which "has often overlapped with and contributed to what has become known as postcolonial studies."[9] The link to Orientalism has been identified by positing the lifespan of postcolonial studies from Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000). The postcolonial field has meant different things to different people: "it is housed in different disciplines yet widely associated with a few; it is viewed either as enormously radical or as the last ideological offspring of western capitalism; it is firmly entrenched in Anglo-U.S. universities yet its disciplinary status remains in question; it seeks to address the non-Western world yet is often received with hostility there."[10] As a whole, one may generalize that what occurred in the quarter century after the appearance of *Orientalism* was a disciplinary shift in postcolonial/global/third world studies from sociological and economic analysis to cultural and theoretical/semiotic/discursive analysis. Simultaneously, postcolonial studies challenged the theoretical models and metanarratives built on the earlier dominant paradigms of modernization, development, and world systems theory.[11]

The problem is, of course, that in a way postcolonialism itself became a new metanarrative, although it is only fair to say that despite some conservative hysteria, it has never been really institutionalized. There are no departments, centers or programs in postcolonial studies, whereas incomparably more attention is paid to and means given for the study of globalization, for example, something that is an eloquent illustration on the different (perceived or real) ideological baggage of the two. Nonetheless, it has undoubtedly achieved an honorary status. What is very interesting to me is that at the time when some are positing the melancholic phase[12] and even the end of postcolonial studies (either in a more polite way, with the mentioned chronology from Said to Hardt and Negri or bluntly, by saying that it is an exhausted paradigm), or at least are seriously scrutinizing where, if anywhere, postcolonial studies are heading, it is precisely at this same time that some East European intellectuals are posing the question of their relation to the postcolonial.[13]

Let us go back to the most general understanding of postcolonialism as a cultural discipline dedicated to the analysis of discourse, and a particular one at that. The question to be asked then is: can the interpretation (mine or someone else's) of balkanism as a discourse be treated as a concrete historical/

geographic version of postcolonial studies? If some (as I do) maintain that this is difficult and not necessarily fortuitous, why the insistence on distinction? And conversely, for the ones who do accept it, what are the benefits (cognitive, political, etc.)?

Here, I should bring in another distinction which David Spurr makes when referring to the postcolonial: firstly, as a historical situation marked by the dismantling of traditional institutions of colonial power; secondly, as a search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial era. "While the first is the object of empirical knowledge, the second is both an intellectual project and a transnational condition that includes, along with new possibilities, certain crises of identity and representation."[14]

I want to deal separately with these two hypostases: the historical and the discursive. Postcolonial studies are a critique of the condition in areas of the word that were colonies. While colonization is surprisingly difficult to define, Jean-Paul Sartre in 1956 produced an extremely lucid analysis in an essay called "Colonialism is a system." He worked from Marx's premise that colonialism presented capitalism in naked form, and for a philosopher proposed a surprisingly concrete and historicized definition: "It is a system which was put in place around the middle of the 19th century, began to bear fruit in about 1880, started to decline after the First World War, and is today [i.e., the 1950s] turning against the colonizing nation."[15]

My objections to the application of postcolonialism to the Balkans refer mostly to the first way postcolonialism is understood. Why do I object? I don't believe that the Ottoman, Habsburg, or Romanov empires, as they were placed in Eastern Europe, can be treated as late colonial empires. Neither do I think can the Soviet Union in its relationship with Eastern Europe[16] (its relationship with Central Asia or the Caucasus falls under a different rubric—that of colonial empire par excellence—although even this is not unanimously accepted). The argument can be made in two ways, inductively or deductively.

In the case of the Ottoman Empire whose legacy, I have argued, has defined the Balkans for some time, I will suggest a number of features, which, according to me, do not allow us to describe it as a colonial empire. First, there is no abyss or institutional/legal distinction between metropole and dependencies. Secondly, there is no previous stable entity which colonizes. The Ottoman Empire became an elaborate state machine and an empire in the course of shaping itself as an expanding polity, which was an organic whole in all its territories. Thirdly, there was no amelioration complex, no civilizing mission obsession comparable to the French or the English colonial project. Fourthly, there is no hegemonic cultural residue from the Ottoman Empire comparable to the linguistic and general cultural hegemony of English in the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere, or of French in Africa and Indochina.

These factors also apply as a whole to the Habsburgs. As far as the Romanov Empire goes, it was, as said, a par excellence case of a colonial empire in the East and in the South, but in its relations to the Balkans the above patterns mostly hold true. I would extend the same verdict about the relationship of the Soviet Union (a case of a possible, although historiographically contested empire) to its East European satellites.[17] Despite the quibbles over the definition of colonization, one of its broadly accepted features is the transfer of control over social organization from the indigenous population to the colonial power. This did not obtain among the Soviet satellites. Eastern European polities retained a considerable control over the social processes, with persisting legal and religious institutions, and even elements of property relations. It seems to me that the historical evidence does not support the claim for Soviet colonization. I would go even further. In a recent article, Liam Conell examines the use of postcolonial theory in relation to Scotland, and finds strong and troubling similarities between the explanations offered by early twentieth-century nationalists and modern literary criticism which reproduces essentialists models of nationality.[18] I hear the same congruent overtones between old-fashioned nationalism and ultra-fashionable postcolonialism when it comes to lament the colonial status of Eastern Europe either vis-à-vis the Ottomans or the Soviets.

Should one be pedantic about that? Maybe not. For structuralists of any kind, the Spanish empire is not much different from the Roman, the Ottoman, the British, the Russian, and so on. In a way, they are all empires and they are colonial. But I would be surprised if at any scholarly convention there would be a panel on the postcolonial sensibilities of fifth-century Gaul or sixth-century Iberia after the collapse of the Roman Empire. After all, despite its universalist articulation, postcolonialism's genealogy and continued development is very discernible in the Indian subcontinent and in Africa of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even the nature of Latin American postcolonialism is contested.[19] The difference between the postimperial and the postcolonial evidently bothers very few beyond the dedicated historian, as expressed succinctly in the following statement: "Whether Balkan nationalism is post-imperial or post-colonial, it is fair to say that it remains distinctly liminal."[20] The liminality of Balkan nationalism can be easily contested but what is striking is the cavalier attitude toward the distinction between imperial and colonial.[21] After all, at stake is a very different theoretical framing in each case.

In an otherwise positive review of my book, Gregory Jusdanis takes me to task for refusing to consider Balkan societies as postcolonial: "While it is true that the social, political and economic relationships between the European imperial powers and their overseas possessions differed from those between the Ottoman state and the Balkans, why could the wars of

independence against this rule not be considered postcolonial?" He further points out that the attempts by nationalist historiographies to cleanse their traditions from the Ottoman legacy can be read as postcolonial endeavors to deny the cultural influence of the former ruler, and asks: "[I]s this not also the typical reaction of every nationalist movement—to distinguish itself from the polity against which it rebels?"[22] Sure it is, but we land in the midst of a methodological conundrum: is every national movement necessarily anticolonial, and does it always produce a postcolonial situation? Are the Kurds in Turkey or Iraq waging an anticolonial struggle? Was the East European "velvet revolution" of 1989, among others, an anticolonial revolution? Did Croatian, Slovenian, Muslim Bosnian, or Kosovar Albanian nationalism culminate in an anti-colonial war against the Serbian colonizer? Is ETA the postcolonial avant-garde of Basque nationalism? I plead professional deformation, but I think that time-bound and place-bound specificity counts. It counts not only in order to avoid cognitive deformations but it matters as well on ethical grounds. The emancipatory mantle of postcolonialism all too often serves as a cover for the perpetual lament of self-victimization.

Yet it is not only an argument following from how we define colonial empires, but also about self-perceptions. Subjectivity matters after all. None of the contemporaries in the Balkans under Ottoman rule felt they were in a colonial positionality. The only one, which insisted on its semi-colonial status, was the Ottoman Empire itself, as voiced by some of its intellectuals at the time, as well as during the period of Republican Turkey. Therefore, until today postcolonial studies have not really made a methodological inroad in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe as a whole, in contrast to Wallerstein's world-systems theory, immensely popular in Greece and Turkey, and widely read in some East European countries even before 1989.

Finally, any meaningful analysis has to do with the questions we are asking, and what is the most adequate framing of the responses. The question that had interested me and continues to interest me is the ontology of the Balkans. I developed the idea of the Balkans as the Ottoman legacy, in an effort to come with a reconstruction, after I had dealt at length with the deconstruction of the discourse. This produced, I am afraid, misunderstanding in some quarters who were impatient with close reading. I will not recapitulate my argument but rather rephrase it: the question boils down to one, which on the surface seems to be purely academic. Yet, I believe it has serious scholarly, political, and moral implications, namely: how do we study a region?

Regions, as most other entities (states, cities, villages) are defined easiest by outlining their borders. Indeed, for a long time, borders have been a preferred object of analysis, especially in examinations of identity. They are a natural first resort, because it is at the margins, at the edge that the

differentiation or disentanglement of entities takes place. Since identity and alterity (otherness) are clearly in a symbiotic relationship, their most sharply defined characteristics are best articulated at this border encounter. Otherness became in consequence a fundamental category not only of social experience but also of social analysis, and in the past decade has made a powerful inroad in historical studies. Borders, however, turned out to be a problematic first choice. One reason is that they themselves are changing, or are subject to different criteria (geographic, political, ethnic, cultural, etc). In the case of the Balkans, this difficulty is very clear when it comes to define its northern borders: is Romania part of the Balkans, is Slovenia, is Croatia, is Hungary? The eastern, southern and western borders are seemingly easy, since they are represented by seas, but is the Aegean really such a rigid border between Greece and the Anatolian coast; or the Adriatic between Italy and Dalmatia? More importantly, the excessive focus on borders imposed an unhealthy obsession with distinction, difference, with Otherness.

Recently, there has been a powerful shift away from border studies toward the now fashionable category of space. This approach allots more and due attention to the cohesive processes and structures within the entity. It has produced valuable works but it also has it dangers, the most important of which, creeping through the back door, is essentialism. This comes not from an inbuilt deficit of the theory which has been developed in a thoughtful and refined way primarily by geographers and anthropologists who have stressed the links between knowledge, power, and spatiality and have pointed out both the metaphorical and material resonance of "space."[23] Rather, it has to do with the sometimes hasty and unreflective application of the category in concrete historical studies. The category "space" is oftentimes uncritically linked to ethnicity or nation—thus, we read in the literature of the space of development of the English nation, or of the Greek, Albanian, and so on—and this, in fact, replicates unintentionally statist and nationalist claims under the guise of a new scholarly jargon, or produces rather static and ahistoric structural analyses.

It is against this background that I am introducing the notion of historical legacy. It does not, in my opinion, displace the notion of space. Instead, it retains the valuable features of the analysis of spatiality while, simultaneously, refining the vector of time, and making it more historically specific. After all, as observed in *A Walk in the Woods*, the popular play about the Cold War, "history is only geography stretched over time."[24] It is on the element of time within this equation that I would like to focus the attention. What is, then, in the light of this approach the answer to the misleadingly simple question: what is a region? Any region can be approached as the complex result of the interplay of numerous historical periods, traditions, and legacies. Painfully aware as I am that categories in the humanities have

long been occupied, I cannot do better than try to explain the exact meaning with which I am trying to inhabit them.

Of the three categories used above, historical periods are the most straightforward one. They delineate a length of time which can be described as having some internal consistency, based on different criteria, and a more or less well delineated beginning or end, based most often on (a cluster of) meaningful events. Historians would fiercely debate the legitimacy of the events used as criteria; they would question the chronology of the periods; some would object altogether to the application of periodization which splits up the organic historical process into seemingly coherent periods that are nothing else but artificial and arbitrary cognitive devices. Yet, by and large, they would generally concede that the above definition is more or less acceptable in abstract terms.

Not so for the other two categories: tradition and legacy. Raymond Williams in his commentary on tradition observed that "tradition in its most general modern sense is a particularly difficult word."[25] Of the manifold meanings throughout the centuries, the general notion of handing down knowledge and ideas survived. Soon it was linked to the idea of respect and duty to the forebears. Given that only some of the many traditions or parts of them are selected for respect or duty, it is difficult, Williams further comments, to approach tradition (in the singular) "in an abstract or exhortatory or, as so often, ratifying use." As far as tradition's antiquity is concerned, "it only takes two generations to make anything traditional: naturally enough, since that is the sense of tradition as active process." Yet, Williams notes that "the word tends to move towards *age-old* and towards ceremony, duty and respect," and he bemoans this as "both a betrayal and a surrender," given the size and variety of what is handed down to us. He also points out that there is a parallel dismissive use of tradition, particularly with the rise of modernization theory, where it is used, especially in its adjectival form, to describe "habits or beliefs inconvenient to virtually any innovation." Yet, this is not a mainstream use, and for the purposes of this analysis, I will adhere to its predominant sense: "Tradition survives in English as a description of a general process of handing down, but there is a very strong and often predominant sense of this entailing respect and duty."[26] We have, in this popular understanding of tradition several components: an active attitude, a conscious selection, an evaluative elevation of elements from a pool created in an accumulative process of handing down.

Legacy is a commonly and broadly used word but it has not entered the specialized vocabulary of historians or other social scientists (bar the legal profession), and therefore it is not considered in different specialized dictionaries, Williams's *Keywords* included. The standard English language dictionaries give it a double meaning: "1. *Law*. A gift or property, esp. personal property, as money, by will; a bequest. 2. Anything handed down from

the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor."[27] As examples of the second use, different dictionaries offer "the legacy of ancient Rome" (*The Random House*) or "a legacy of religious freedom" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*). Thus, alongside its legal use, in its second meaning legacy is used very closely to the connotation of tradition. But the resemblance ends at the basic level: both designate the processes (and the artifacts) of handing down. Beyond that, there are significant differences. Legacy, unlike tradition, does not involve an active process of conscious selection of elements bequeathed from the past. It encompasses everything that is handed down from the past, whether one likes it or not. In this sense, it neither betrays the past nor surrenders to the agents' active meddling. The legacy may be exalted or maligned by the successors but this comes as a secondary process. Legacy per se as an abstract signifier is neutral.

Heritage and inheritance are two other possible candidates. Used primarily as legal terms for both property and birthright, they can also be utilized to designate "something passed down from preceding generations; tradition."[28] In this sense, they are actually synonyms of legacy. There are, thus, no semantic reasons to privilege legacy over heritage or inheritance. The reason is merely aesthetic: a subjective impression that first, legacy is not used as often, and, secondly, that heritage and inheritance have a more legal ring about them. It is, then, my choice to make the word "legacy" in its syntagmatic relationship with "historical"—historical legacy—the receptacle of a meaning on which I will elaborate below.

For purely cognitive purposes I distinguish between legacy as continuity and legacy as perception. Legacy as continuity is the survival but also gradual waning of some of the characteristics of the entity immediately before its collapse. The legacy as perception, on the other hand, is the articulation and rearticulation of how the entity is thought about at different time periods by different individuals or groups. These should not be interpreted as "real" versus "imagined" characteristics as the maybe unfortunate use of the terms "continuity" and "perception" implies. The characteristics of the continuity are themselves often perceptual, and perceptions are no less a matter of continuous real social facts. The better way to define the distinction is to say that in both cases the categories designate social facts but that these are at different removes from experience. In the instance of perception, the social fact is removed yet a further step from immediate reality, and one can perhaps juxtapose the natural versus the cultural or textual status of the social interaction.

Let me resort to two concrete examples within my scope of competence of how to apply the category: the Balkans and Eastern Europe. If we look at the numerous historical periods, traditions, and legacies that shape Southeastern Europe, some of these periods and legacies have been synchronic or overlapping, others consecutive or completely segregated;[29] some have

played themselves out in the same geographic space, others have involved the southeast European area in different macroregions.[30] They can be also classified according to their influence in different spheres of social life: political, economic, demographic, cultural, etc. One can enumerate many of them: the Roman, the Byzantine, the Ottoman, the communist, to mention some of the most important political legacies. In the religious sphere, one can single out the Christian, Muslim, and Judaic traditions with their numerous sects and branches; in the sphere of art and culture, the legacies of the pre-Greeks, the Greeks, the numerous ethnic groups that settled the peninsula, and so forth; in social and demographic terms, the legacies of large and incessant migrations, ethnic diversity, semi-nomadism, a large and egalitarian agricultural sphere, late urbanization alongside a constant continuity of urban life.

Of the political legacies which have shaped the southeast European peninsula as a whole (the period of Greek antiquity, Hellenism, Roman rule, etc.), two can be singled out as crucial until the nineteenth century. One is the millennium of Byzantium with its profound political, institutional, legal, religious, and general cultural impact. The other is the half millennium of Ottoman rule that gave the peninsula its name, and established the longest period of political unity it had experienced. Not only did part of Southeastern Europe acquire a new name during this period, it has been chiefly the Ottoman elements or the ones perceived as such which have mostly invoked the current stereotype of the Balkans. In the narrow sense of the word, then, one can argue that the Balkans are, in fact, the Ottoman legacy.

The legacy as continuity, as I already pointed out, is a notion different from the characteristics of the Ottoman polity or the Ottoman period in general. It is a process that begins *after* the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist for particular regions which shaped themselves into successor states, and is the aggregate of characteristics handed down chiefly from the historical situation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I further attempted a systematic review of the workings of the Ottoman legacy as continuity in the political, cultural, social, and economic spheres where it displayed different degrees of perseverance. In practically all spheres, except the demographic and the sphere of popular culture, the break was enacted almost immediately after the onset of political independence of the separate Balkan states and, as a whole, was completed by the end of World War I; thereafter it turned into legacy as perception. In the realm of demography, however, the Ottoman legacy continued for some time and, more importantly, became intertwined with and gradually transformed into the influence of the Turkish nation-state. The Ottoman legacy as perception, on the other hand, is the process of interaction between an ever-evolving and accumulating past, and ever-evolving and accumulating perceptions of

generations of people who are redefining their evaluations of the past, in a word the question not of reconstructing, but of constructing the past in works of historiography, fiction, journalism, and everyday discourse. The legacy as perception is firmly built in the discourse of Balkan nationalism as one of its most important pillars, and displays striking similarities in all Balkan countries. Precisely because it is at the center of securing present social arrangements, and above all legitimizing the state, it is bound to be reproduced for some time to come.

The countries defined as Balkan (i.e., the ones which participated in the historical Ottoman sphere) have been moving steadily away from their Ottoman legacy, and with this also from their balkanness. I want to strongly emphasize here that this is a statement which is devoid of any evaluative element. It is also with this in mind that I argued that what we are witnessing today in the geographic Balkans—namely, the eradication of the final vestiges of an imperial legacy of ethnic multiplicity and coexistence, and its substitution with institutionalized ethnically homogeneous bodies—may well be an advanced stage of the final Europeanization of the region, and the end of the historic Balkans, if they are, as I think they are, the Ottoman period and the Ottoman legacy.[31]

Let us now take the larger concept of Eastern Europe. In some ways—geographically—it encompasses the Balkans, yet in a politico-historical sense it actually divided the Balkans during the period of the Cold War. Again, if we look at the historical periods, traditions and legacies that shape what constitutes today Eastern Europe, we shall see that some of these periods and legacies have been synchronic or overlapping, others consecutive or completely segregated; some encompassed the whole region, while others involved only some of the area's constituent parts in different macroregions. For example, the very strong imprint of the legacy of the Roman Empire included the whole of Southeastern Europe (the Balkans), but only small parts of Central Europe in a space stretching from the British Isles to the Caspian Sea and Mesopotamia (but excluding most of Northern and much of Central Europe). The cliché goes that the area of Western Christianity (both in its Catholic and Protestant versions) is the true and only heir of Roman traditions, especially its legal system. Yet, one can hear the same claim (and arguably far more convincingly) that the *imperium* lived on through Byzantium, and as some distinguished historians have argued, also through the Ottomans. Likewise, communism involved Eastern Europe (with a significant part of the Balkans) in a space stretching through the Eurasian landmass to Central Asia (and including China in some counts).

In fact, this most recent legacy, albeit the shortest, is usually neglected, precisely by the ones who insist on the permanence of the previous imperial legacies. Let me make a glib statement. It is preposterous to look for a socialist legacy *in* Eastern Europe. "Eastern Europe" as a political space

today is the socialist legacy. After the Second World War its nineteenth-century meaning of an intermediary space balancing between two centers of political and economic expansion (Western Europe and Russia), which in the interwar period had given way to the function of a *cordon sanitaire* against bolshevism, had dramatically changed. Anyone who has lived in pre-1989 Eastern Europe would concur that the notion made sense only as a political synonym for Warsaw Pact Europe. Greece and Turkey were part of Western Europe in those days, and the joke was how Portugal of the carnation revolution might become East European. Like with other similar processes, the socialist period was a continuous and complex one. It ended around 1989; the moment it ended, it was turned into a legacy. Under the rubric of legacy as continuity, we can look at the workings of the socialist heritage in different spheres: the political, the economic, the social, the realm of *mentalité*, and they are strikingly similar in all post-communist countries. Whether they like it or not, for most transitologists the preferred and logical sphere of reference is Eastern Europe. The socialist legacy as continuity displays different degrees of perseverance in separate spheres and in separate countries but, like any legacy, it is bound to subside; after which it will be relegated to the realm of perception.

Once we approach Eastern Europe as a distinct historical legacy (and I believe it is the socialist/communist one), we are bound to postulate it is finite. Only, in history these things do not happen so abruptly, they are gradual. As a long-term process, Eastern Europe is slowly fading away. Integration with the European institutional framework may occur over the next ten to twenty to fifty to one hundred years. In the realm of perception, however, we are speaking of the discrete experience of two or three generations. Eastern Europe may and most likely is going to disappear as a category, but it will be more difficult to obliterate attitudes from the inside as well as from the outside. One of the reasons to invoke this concept and this legacy is that it is the most important medium in which the recent debate over Central Europe and the Balkans has to be historicized. Central Europe as the emancipatory ideology of the 1980s and the early 1990s, despite the rhetoric of pertaining to a quasi-Habsburg or West European space, belongs to the hermeneutic realm of Eastern Europe (to reiterate, Eastern Europe not as an eternal concept, but as the historical experience of the Cold War period).

The state socialist (or communist) legacy is the latest in a sequence of legacies, and, as already pointed out, it became a legacy only after the completion of the socialist period in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unlike the Ottoman legacy which, I have argued, bears the characteristics of only the later two-centuries-old Ottoman era, the socialist legacy, because of the relative brevity of the phenomenon, would reflect the characteristics of the whole fifty- (or seventy-) year-old period. But the socialist period is itself

a subcategory of a larger phenomenon which some would argue has also turned into a legacy, while others see it as a still ongoing process. I am referring, of course, to what came in the wake of the Ottoman period and what, depending on the preferred paradigm or terminology, has been defined as the capitalist world economy (Wallerstein), or the capitalist mode of production (Marx), or the "iron cage" of capitalist modernity (Max Weber), or the age of industrialism, or urbanism, or modernization, or globalization and its uneven impact, etc. For Zygmunt Bauman, it is modernity with its Enlightenment message where capitalism and socialism are "married forever in their attachment to modernity," and where modernity itself is turning into a legacy.[32]

Thinking in terms of historical legacies, with their simultaneity and overlapping, and their gradually waning effects, allows us to emphasize the complexity and plasticity of the historical process. In the particular case of the Balkans and Eastern Europe as a whole, it allows us to rescue them from a debilitating diachronic and spatial ghettoization, and insert them in multifarious cognitive frameworks over space and time. Europe, in this vision, emerges as a complex palimpsest of differently shaped entities, which not only expose the porosity of internal frontiers, but question the absolute stability of its external ones.

I have played with the idea of trying to create a digital image, which would illustrate the design of the palimpsest, where different legacies could be marked by separate colors on a horizontal scale. Their superimposition, as well as their noncoincidental, phased borders would neatly illustrate the relativity of regional borders across long historical periods. At the same time, however, the very visual premise—namely, marking a legacy in one color—already essentializes and homogenizes any separate legacy. The interesting thing would be to also visualize the fact that structurally cognate elements in different legacies, for example property relations or family structure or state institutions, and so on, should be rendered as shades of the same color on a vertical scale. This, however, would complicate the image to such an extent, that, although more loyal to reality, it would be visually ineffective and unable to make the point. After all, as some contemporary philosophers have maintained, we are living in the "image society" rather than the "information society," where we witness a struggle of images, rather than a struggle of ideas, and what dominates is not a *Zeitgeist* but a Zeit-image, stereoimages rather than stereotypes, pre-images rather than pre-judices, and new-image in the place of Orwell's newspeech. In order to be recognizable and effective, the image *ab definitio* reduces reality much more strongly than the logos. I therefore prefer to stay with the visually imperfect but more complicated verbal metaphor of the palimpsest at the cost of reaching a much more limited audience.

If, as I have argued, thinking in terms of historical legacies is an acceptable and fruitful answer to the question I pose, would framing it within the postcolonial paradigm or stance deliver some deeper insights? I believe not. While I am all for looking for alternative framing paradigms, and while I continue to be full of admiration for many postcolonial works, I do not think that changing one metanarrative for another grand theory is any solution. It all depends on the questions we are asking. And certainly, while one could rightly say that, in the end, it is all splitting hair over knowledge-power relations, I agree that an excessive "emphasis on abstract knowledge-power patterns may interfere with our ability to recognize and recover the more determinate, more concrete, and ultimately more messy activities" of history.[33] Besides, I do not think that a kind of theoretically informed empiricism (or simply put, intelligent rigorous scholarship) is a counter or challenge to the theoretical array of studies.

Although I admit to a historical and even empirical bias, I still prefer to view the world from a plane rather than from a train. But, at the same time, I prefer to view the world from a plane rather than from a rocket, which I leave to the intrepid theoreticians. This does not mean that I claim a kind of privileged, "objective" middle road. I just prefer (for aesthetic and disciplinarian reasons) the middle range and middle velocity view, but, as we know, no view is more true than the other. It just gazes and reflects from different angles and distances. Here I am simply arguing that the historian's view can produce certain representations that can be missed from a gaze too close or too distant, and that I personally happen to consider these representations beautiful.

At the same time, I said that my objections referred primarily to the way we assess postcoloniality as a historical phenomenon. Things get more complicated if we look at the second approach as defined by Spurr: the search for alternatives to the discourses of the colonial era, something that is both an intellectual project and a transnational condition that includes, along with new possibilities, certain crises of identity and representation. Here there is an interesting twist, particularly in the understanding of subjectivity. I already said that a self-understanding as colonials was absent in the Balkans, with some qualifications about the claim for a semi-colonial status for the Ottoman Empire. But contemporary East European intellectuals, that is, intellectuals in the post-1989 world, increasingly see themselves in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the centers of knowledge production and dissemination in the West, and some explicitly speak of intellectual neoimperialism, neocolonialism, or self-colonization, whence the identification with postcoloniality. Outside observers also employ the term and a recent article by Steven Sampson is entitled "Weak States, Uncivil Societies and Thousands of NGOs: Benevolent Colonialism in the Balkans."[34] This

is where, according to me, an opening is produced, through which postcolonial theory finds an attentive ear among a new intellectual clientele. Another is the pressing question of location. Critics of balkanism have been mostly located in Western universities or in the NGO sector, and these positions are very reminiscent of the agents of and adversaries of postcolonialism. Yet, this is nothing specific to the Balkans, but an overall East European phenomenon. There is, thus, at present an unquestionable link between a number of East European intellectuals and postcolonialism, and while I affirm that the link is not effectuated via balkanism, it still merits to be analyzed.

Even this broadened understanding, however, is not entirely unproblematic. John Dunham Kelly has identified three powerful antinomies in postcolonial theory, some of which can be named by the work of their most influential theoreticians. One is the antinomy concerning the agency of dominated groups, Gayatri Spivak's famous "Can the subaltern speak?" in which she raised the question of whether subalterns have the power to represent themselves, or whether it is precisely the lack of that power that constitutes them as subaltern. The second antinomy refers to the power and possible inevitability of western paradigms, the "provincializing Europe" of Dipesh Chakrabarty. The third is about when and how postcoloniality might end.[35]

The second antinomy poses particular difficulties for East European (Balkan inclusive) studies. It has been noted by some colleagues outside our field (mostly colleagues from Middle Eastern or South Asian studies) that among East Europeans there is a specific kind of ontological Angst to "decenter" Europe.[36] That may be so, but I submit to a very materialist bias: it simply reflects the physical fact that Europe (in a very elastic but mostly geographic understanding) is the natural geographic and historical background against which developments in one of its subregions in particular time periods can be most adequately projected. So, the task for balkanists and East Europeanists consists not so much of "provincializing Europe" but in "deprovincializing Western Europe." Not only has Western Europe expropriated the category Europe with concrete political and moral consequences. In the academic sphere this translates as the mandatory necessity on the part of East Europeanists to have a good grasp of the West European fields, and the sanctioned ignorance of West Europeanists about developments in the Eastern half of the continent. This project, if successful, will actually succeed in "provincializing" Europe effectively for the rest of the world, insofar as the European paradigm will have broadened to include not only a cleansed abstract ideal and a version of power, but also one of dependency, subordination, and messy struggles. And it is maybe at this juncture that there could be a genuine and fruitful confluence of aims be-

tween postcolonial theory and anti-balkanism. But for that, one can remain historically specific and continue to speak different conceptual languages.

The third antinomy outlined by Kelly, centered on the boundary issues between postcoloniality and globalization, relates directly to the positionality of contemporary East European intellectuals. According to some authors, globalization is the successor of, and "the late capitalist liberator from postcoloniality, as the globe moves from Western modernity to modernity at large or to alternative modernities, negating all vestiges of asymmetric colonial relations." The counter argument, expressed powerfully by Kelly, asserts that "postcoloniality and globalization can be seen as two sides of the same coin, the coin of American power." In his vision, "postcoloniality could end only when American power is as thoroughly confronted as European power has been, and the limitations intrinsic to the formal symmetries of the political present are as fully overcome as have been the formal asymmetries of the colonial past."[37] It is within this context that Judit Bodnar has highlighted the new common East European experience of marginality and has argued persuasively about the similarities between postcolonial and postsocialist theory. Carefully drawing the line and avoiding the stretching of coloniality so that it would accommodate Eastern Europe, she nonetheless calls on opening up of categories that were hitherto used almost exclusively to conceptualize the non-Western experience.[38] In this vision, the application of postcolonial studies serves largely emancipator goals; it seems to empower East European intellectuals by propelling them into a paradigm which by now pretends to be speaking a universal language. Indeed, Chatterjee has claimed as much: "Having traveled from Italy to India, the idea of subaltern history has now produced a generally available methodological and stylistic approach to modern historiography that could be used anywhere." We are back under the spell of grand theory but will the lure of a new metanarrative prove to be a panacea?

## NOTES

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "In Memoriam: Edward W. Said," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, nos. 1–2 (2003): 6–7.

2. Spivak, "In Memoriam," 6.

3. Spivak, "In Memoriam," 7.

4. Although I very clearly stated my admiration for Said's in the preface to *Imagining the Balkans*, because of numerous subsequent misunderstandings I will repeat it here: "Because I am situating myself within the rich and growing genre of the 'invention of tradition' and because of the obvious analogies between my endeavor and 'orientalism,' early on in my work I was advised to avoid direct intellectual alignment with Edward Said so as not to carry the baggage of the increasing criticism

against his ideas. Not least because of an inborn anarchist streak, I wish at this point to acknowledge my intellectual indebtedness to Said. I would certainly not declare that his has been the single most stimulating and fruitful influence but it has been undeniably important. I think I have distanced myself enough and have shown the basic distinctions (but also correspondences) in the treatment of my own concept of 'balkanism' from Said's 'orientalism'" (Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], viii–ix). In her recent book *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), which treats the Ottoman Empire as a colonial formation and employs postcolonial theory, Mary Neuburger maintains that I have posited that "Balkanism . . . is entirely distinct from and much more injurious than Orientalism" (6). This is absurd. What I claimed was that balkanism is sufficiently distinct to warrant special treatment and its own framework. Besides, I would insist that my attributed vices be consistent. It is impossible to argue in the same breath that Balkanism "is entirely distinct from and much more injurious than Orientalism" (which I haven't), and to assert that the "Bulgarian sensibility of victimization is much less acute" in order to reject notions of Bulgarian postcoloniality (which I have).

5. For the purposes of this text, I am using Southeastern Europe and the Balkans as synonyms. On the nuanced differences between the two, see my treatment in "Historische Vermächtnisse als Analysekategorie. Der Fall Südosteuropa," in *Europa und die Grenzen im Kopf*, ed. Karl Kaser (Klagenfurt, Austria: Wieser Verlag, 2003), 221–46.

6. Spivak was alluding to the title of *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dušan Bjeli and Obrad Savi (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002). This collection of essays, written by philosophers and literary scholars, while accepting the difference between balkanism and orientalism, explicitly posits balkanism "as a critical study of colonial representation" (4).

7. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 10–20, esp. 16–17.

8. It is symptomatic that there is not one single historian among the fifteen authors of *Balkan as Metaphor*. Seven are literary scholars, six philosophers, one anthropologist, and one a feminist and antiwar activist. To my knowledge, the only historian who works on the premise that the Ottoman Empire was a colonial formation and the Balkans have a postcolonial predicament is Mary Neuburger in her book *The Orient Within*.

9. Partha Chatterjee, "Subaltern History," *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (IESBS)*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Bates (Amsterdam, N.Y.: Elsevier Science, 2001), 15240.

10. Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Esty, eds., introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 2. The lifespan of postcolonial studies has been identified by Vilashini Cooppan in the same volume.

11. Loomba et al., introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, 46.

12. The expression belongs to Kaplana Seshadri-Crooks, "At the Margins of Postcolonial Studies: Part 1," in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Fawzi Afzal-Khan and Kaplana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 3–4.

13. The volume *Balkan as Metaphor* was already mentioned. In this particular case, there may be also another correlation at hand, which comes to explain the special predisposition for postcolonial theory in the case of the former Yugoslavia, even before and apart from the fact of the wars for the Yugoslav succession in the 1990s. Of the fourteen articles in the volume, nine have been written by ex-Yugoslavs of the generation which was socialized under Tito, who had distinct ambitions and successfully maneuvered for the leadership of the Third World, and where Yugoslavia harbored special relations with India. Many intellectuals, some in the above volume, either studied in India or visited, and in any case have kept open a tradition of intellectual contacts. Apart from this case, which makes an explicit link between balkanism and postcolonialism, the other examples of applying postcolonial theory by East Europeans refer mostly to the postsocialist period and the involvement of Eastern Europe in the process of globalization: József Böröcz, "Empire and Coloniality in the 'Eastern Enlargement' of the European Union," in "Empire's New Clothes: Unveiling EU Enlargement," ed. József Böröcz and Melinda Kovács, *Central Europe Review* (2001): 4–50; Henry F. Carey and Rafal Raciborski, "Postcolonialism: A Valid Paradigm for the Former Sovietized States and Yugoslavia?" in *East European Politics and Societies* 18, no. 2 (2004): 191–235.

14. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 6.

15. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 31.

16. This is not the opinion of Carey and Raciborski in "Postcolonialism." They apply the postcolonial paradigm not only to the FSU but to all ex-Soviet satellites and even to Yugoslavia and Albania on the grounds that "the communist system was indirectly exported by the Soviets, even if they were expelled from much of the Balkans" (200). This forced argument can be twisted by saying that the Soviet Union itself may have been colonized by a western ideology like Marxism.

17. On the imperial and colonial nature of Russia and the Soviet Union, see Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Alexandre Benningsen, "Colonization and Decolonization in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4 (1969); Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations* (London: Basic Books, 1994); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994); Robert Strayer, "Decolonization, Democratization and Communist Reform: The Soviet Collapse in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of World History* 12 (2001).

18. Liam Conell, "Scottish Nationalism and the Colonial Vision of Scotland," *Interventions*, June 2004.

19. See, in particular, L. Klor de Alva, "Colonialism and Postcoloniality as (Latin)/American Mirages," *Colonial Latin American Review* 1 (1992): 3–23.

20. Dušan Bjelić, "Introduction: Blowing Up the 'Bridge,'" in *Balkan as Metaphor*, 6.

21. There is reason to argue, for example, that the United States is an imperial enterprise without being a colonial empire.

22. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16, no. 2 (1998): 376.

23. See Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 63, and especially chapters 1 and 6; Derek Gregory, "Social Theory and Human Geography," in *Human Geography: Society, Space, and Social Science*, ed. Derek Gregory, Ron Martin, and Graham Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); D. Gregor and J. Urry, eds., *Social Relations and Spatial Structure* (London: Macmillan, 1985); L. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smithe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); R. Butlin, *Historical Geography: Through the Gates of Time and Space* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993); Dodgshon, *Society in Time and Space*. For an anthropological take on the notion of space, see Rudolf zur Lippe, "Raum," in Christoph Wulf, Hrsg., *Vom Menschen. Handbuch Historischer Antrhopologie* (Weinheim und Basel: Beltz Verlag, 1997), 169–79.

24. Lee Blessing, *A Walk in the Woods: A Play in Two Acts* (1998), quoted in William Wallace, *Central Europe: Core of the Continent, or Periphery of the West?* (London: Eleni Nakou Foundation, 1999), 5.

25. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 318.

26. Williams, *Keywords*, 319–20.

27. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1987), 1098. This detailed dictionary gives also a third, obsolete meaning as "office, function, or commission of a legate."

28. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 607. Inheritance has also the additional biological significance of genetic transmission of characteristics.

29. One could speak of synchronic and overlapping periods, by taking the example of the late Roman, Byzantine, and early Ottoman empires, and the period of great migrations from Central Asia (with is numerous political legacies as well as the social legacy of semi-nomadism), which peaked in the fourth and fifth centuries and whose spurts were felt until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The same goes for the synchronic workings of the whole variety of different religious systems in the region, both as legacies and ongoing processes. An instance of ceasura between periods, and little if any overlap between legacies is, for example, the Hellenistic and communist period and legacy. Otherwise, legacies fade away in intensity with the passage of time but, in principle, they would be overlapping by definition.

30. An example of the first would be the Byzantine and the Ottoman period and legacy. Until the sixteenth century, there was an almost complete spatial coincidence between the spheres of influence of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, both in Europe and in Asia Minor. After the early sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire expanded its space in North Africa and elsewhere, but in Southeastern Europe both the space of the historical periods and that of the legacies are coincidental. For an example of the second sort, one can point to another two period and legacies: the Roman Empire, which included Southeastern Europe in a space stretching from the British Isles to the Caspian and Mesopotamia (but excluding much of Northern and Central Europe), and the period and legacy of communism, which involved part of Southeastern Europe in a space encompassing the whole of Eastern Europe, and stretching through the Eurasian landmass to Central Asia (or including even China in some counts).

31. I wish to state strongly that I am not idealizing the imperial experience but simply pointing out that it had different organizational base lines from the nation state. Any "imperial nostalgia" can be easily dispelled by a detailed knowledge of the forces that felt oppressed, fought and, finally, brought down the empires. This may seem obvious and trivial but I feel compelled to include this proleptic remark, in view of the recent and growing trend to romanticize past empires—the British, the Habsburg, the Ottoman, and not quite yet but going there, the Russian—which has permeated much even of the academic output.

32. Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 222.

33. Loomba et al., introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, 43 (MS page).

34. Sanimir Resic and Barbara Tornquist-Plewa, eds., *The Balkans in Focus: Cultural Boundaries in Europe* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2002).

35. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Bates, eds., *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (IESBS)* (Amsterdam, New York: Elsevier Science, 2001), 11845–48 (as *IESBS*).

36. I never encountered this in writing but it has happened too often at oral fora to warrant special notice.

37. *IESBS*, 11848. See also J. D. Kelly, "Time and the Global: Against the Homogeneous, Empty Communities in Contemporary Social Theory," in *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 839–71. Likewise, Peter Hulme and Ali Behdad believe that postcolonial studies are finding their real critical vocation only in the age of globalization, by insisting on the structural links between the colonial and neocolonial forms of global hierarchy (Loomba et al., introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, 10 [MS page]).

38. Judit Bodnar, "Shamed by Comparison: Eastern Europe and the 'Rest,'" in *Europe's Symbolic Geographies*, ed. Sorin Antohi and Larry Wolff (CEU Press, forthcoming). I am grateful to the author for allowing me to consult her chapter in advance.

# 10

# Anxious Intellectuals: Framing the Nation as Class in Belarus

*Elena Gapova*

> Sometimes you get the impression the Free Speech movement produced more corporate executives than Harvard Business School.
>
> —David Brooks[1]

In his "Invitation to Sociology" Peter Berger defined sociology as an attempt to understand.[2] For several years already I have been trying to understand the "perturbations" that happened with the democratic and liberal visions of the brave new world that used to be the mantra of Soviet liberal intelligentsia. When the new world did arrive, many former critics of the "Soviet regime," semi-dissident proponents of free speech and human rights, who had spent their nights reading *samizdat*, listening to the jammed "Voice of America" programming, and dreaming of freedom and the abolition of all forms of censorship, reemerged as patriarchal nationalists, religious conservatives, moral censors and antifeminists: put differently, as the promoters of new boundaries and of various forms of censorship. Those who have retained liberal views are too often full of contempt for "the people," whom they see as lowly and vulgar *sovki*, bearing the worst "Soviet" psychological makeup and not being able to embrace liberal values. Some sociologists related the "perverted" character of Soviet social, political, and economic institutions to a particular human type and argued that fundamental changes in personality structure were needed before any civilizing changes in institutions could be realized.[3]

Andrey Sinyavsky, an exiled Soviet dissident and writer was indignant of the intellectual position constructed on the opposition to "the people," for that was an extreme deviation from the traditional intelligentsia vision of *narod*.[4] On the other hand, this position is opposed to the Soviet

developmental project, which initially embraced the idea of a new person, a communist man, more advanced spiritually, than an average human being and living according to the principle "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Brezhnevist-era propaganda celebrated Soviet people as a "new historical unity" who had arguably embodied a new, fraternal type of social bondage. These idealizing views were done with during perestroika, as some intellectuals reverted to the notions of the quality of population and the quality of "genofond" (genetic pool) to explain the calamities of Soviet history. They argued that Stalin's purges had wiped out the bloom of the nation: the best educated, the most talented, those incarnating ulterior principles and not prone to moral compromise. Thus the human "material," with which intelligentsia is left, is just not good enough to realize any democratic projects. For example, a Belarusian intellectual characterizes his contemporaries, who, in his view, are more concerned with their well-being ("full stomach"), than freedom, in the following way: "our local population has inherited from their ancestors only those skills which had ensured their survival when authorities resorted to the use of force, and are absolutely not capable of articulating their critical will in any civilized form."[5]

This text will be telling a story involving some Belarusian intellectual groups, who in pursuit of their alleged democracy cause find themselves across the barricade from the "people." What needs to be explained, then, is the reason for this discursive alienation. I see this transformation of the intellectual vision as a part of their response to the "crisis of intelligentsia," a social process into which intellectual actors are currently involved and inside which they try to reinvent themselves as a group with interests. My assertion is that the Belarusian situation is not unique, but is an ultimate expression of some trends common for the post-Soviet region, where intellectuals try to negotiate their place within the new social order. Belarus, often labeled the last dictatorship in Europe, makes, for a number of reasons, a representative case study, which can be a clue to a larger postsocialist conundrum.

## THE REVOLUTION THAT NEVER HAPPENED

During the last decade several post-Soviet nations have lived through major power confrontations, which resulted in the overthrow of formally legitimate governments by Westernized elites. The events got the name of colored revolutions after the Ukrainian "Orange Revolution," which took place in 2004. An earlier one, named "the Revolution of Roses," but smaller in scale, was realized in Georgia, and still another, the "Tulip Revolution," in Kyrgyzstan. All of them were spurred by controversial presidential elec-

tions, as the *nomenklatura*-type elites with communist and/or criminal past, who had stayed in power since the 1990s, resorted to media manipulation and the use of police against street protests to conceal threatening election results. Those who opposed them on the other side claimed to represent people rising for justice and their human dignity. Another thing common for all the revolutions was their spectacular visual form: developing as popular "performances," which made them attractive for younger people, they were extensively televised by international media. The growing use of the Internet was their mobilizing resource; flash-mobs, humor, and art helped to deliver a message, while local NGOs, believed to be grassroots, but openly reliant both financially and ideologically on Western governments and foundations, were involved in them in significant ways.

A similar event was expected in Belarus in March 2006: even before the presidential elections did take place, the "jeans revolution" was discussed in oppositional media as well as in some European newspapers. For example, the British *Financial Times* published an article asking whether a jeans revolution was capable of liberating Europe from its last surviving dictator.[6] The color of the forthcoming revolution, for the pattern of having a powerful symbol had already been established, was supposed to be blue: the color of the sky, of liberty, and, importantly, of the flag of the European Union which symbolized the freedom of which the nation had been deprived since 1994, when Alexander Lukashenko had been elected the president in the first democratic elections. Blue ribbons, readily delivered "from Europe," were handed out by activists in the streets of the capital city to inspire a revolutionary mood and to establish a visual continuity with earlier colored revolutions. Wearing the ribbons, which could be classified as unsanctioned protest, was quite dangerous, for the lack of rights for publicly expressing political views is no joke in Belarus.

But against all hopes, the revolution did not happen: unlike the way it had been in the Ukraine, Georgia, or Kyrgyzstan, Belarusian people did not take to the streets to support several hundred (at certain times, several thousand) protesters, who rallied against the reelection of Alexander Lukashenko.[7] The opposition argued that the March 2006 elections, as well as the ones that took place five years earlier, were both illegal and unfair. They were illegal, because to participate in them for the third time, which was against the Constitution, Lukashenko changed it, for the second time, allegedly on request from the people. They were not fair, because the opposition was not given a fair chance or hardly any chance at all. Some political parties were banned from the polls, others were almost ousted through media manipulation and "administrative resources," that is, the local authorities, police, and courts. State sponsored media advertised the president's program, while independent media were hardly available outside the capital city, because of the obstacles put to them. There was pressure on state

employees and students to vote for the president. Any sociological polls but the government ones were forbidden, and thus no one can really say how many votes *were* cast for the candidates. The Central Election Committee reported the president's victory at 83 percent; Independent Institute for Social and Economic research, which had polled people clandestinely, declared in several weeks that the president had won, but at 63 percent.[8] Alexander Lukashenko later recognized that when he had learned of his own victory at 93 percent, he ordered to change the figure to be announced to 83 percent, out of modesty. A decent guy indeed.

On the election day oppositional leaders appealed to the nation to hold a rally at the October Square in Minsk. By late evening, as the news arrived of the president's landslide victory and the crowd roared with indignation, it was suggested to return to the square the next day to sum up the election results. It was on that next day that several young people, evidently inspired by the spectacle of the Ukrainian Maidan, put up the first tent on the cold night pavement. In a couple of hours, there were several tents and dozens of young people ready to remain there "till the end." According to the urban legend, the four-day act of nonviolent civil disobedience was an impromptu thing.[9] The oppositional leaders, having to be inventive, urged everyone to phone their friends and relatives to inform them of the protests and to ask for hot coffee and blankets. One of the participants described this beginning in her blog:

> On March the 20th, in the evening, the first tents were put up. Young people, guys and girls, holding their hands, surrounded those who were putting up the tents, to shield and protect them. It became clear immediately what was to be done. My grandmother lives across the street from the Square. I said as soon I appeared at the door: "Turn on the kettle." While the water was heating, I picked up all the warm clothes that could be found. I even discovered an old cottonwool coat. I told my mother that there were tents in the Square and that I was going to stay there. We needed hot tea, which, most probably, would be needed throughout the whole night. Mama was scared.[10]

The camp was permanently surrounded by militia and ununiformed agents, who tended to stop anyone trying to deliver food, hot tea and blankets, but these, somehow, were delivered anyway. During the day just several people were staying near the tents under the falling snow, but in the evenings, the public space of the Square became much more populated. Passing cars horned their support, women brought homemade pirozhki, speeches were made and flags waved, with some slogans in English, so the world could understand: as international TV crews started arriving, the campers, competing for emotional attention, became aware of their spectacular potential.

Government media, busy with celebrating the president's victory, hardly mentioned the camp, presenting it as an anarchic gathering of moral devi-

ants and brutes, concerned less with democracy than projecting Western interests and, in fact, directly supported by some Western governments.[11] On the forth night, at around 3 AM the camp was "liquidated" by OMON (special police force): according to some evidence, the protesters, while transported to prison, were told, as a "joke," that they would be shot in a forest, and the women were told that they would be raped. The captives remained in the prison yard for several hours without a permission to use bathrooms, and in the morning, hasty judges sentenced more than four hundred detainees to fifteen days' imprisonment for disturbing public order. The sentence implied the loss of jobs for those employed at the state sector and the expulsion from universities for students.[12] State TV vilified the campers by displaying porno magazines, used condoms, empty vodka bottles, and syringes allegedly found in the tents, but, most probably, put there by the TV-crews to plant a vision of moral degradation. Belarusian state media was selling a cover story of the enemies of the nation, on pay from the West, plotting to undermine and overthrow the legitimate government, the way it had happened in Serbia.[13]

At this point I need to stop to resolve some methodological issues which arise when heartless social scientists turn to touchy subjects, involving human heroism and sacrifice or cruelty. I am looking for a structural pattern, and my further analysis will rely on actors, interests and other social categories, and some readers might imagine a crude "expert" disregarding human agency in favor of an alienated structural explanation and thus failing to take account of the microprocesses at the level of the individual. Under these charges I am turning to the point made by Georgi Derluguian in his book focused on the extremely charged subject of Chechnya intellectuals: some of his interviewees might have been involved in wartime atrocities (at which point he stopped interviews). Derluguian points to "the false antinomy of structure and agency," which is effectively overcome by resorting to the operational concepts of habitus and structural field, offered by Pierre Bourdieu. Through this conceptual apparatus, developed to analyze ideologies and intellectuals, the actions of intellectuals, who promote interests and create alliances across classes, are seen within a certain "structural field." Thus "Bourdieu has shown us how to apply, in research practice, the intuitions of earlier thinkers such as . . . Antonio Gramsci."[14] Relying on similar principles in my further analysis, I will operate outside of moral categories, but refer to structured relations that define "a form of sociation and a discursive strategy that corresponds to it."[15] This said, I can now revert to my topic.

The March events launched an existential search for answers as to why the nation did not join the protest to turn it into a decisive blow on the "regime," for neither entrepreneurs, nor workers, not even intelligentsia in any significant numbers or the drivers of the horning cars stood in the square. Though the evening rallies did attract up to ten thousand people

in the capital city, in Ukraine or Georgia hundreds of thousands went into the streets. Thus journalists, scholars, and public intellectuals glorified the young campers as a postcommunist generation, who had internalized democratic values and by refusing to swallow the lies, had saved the honor of the apathetic nation. The nonviolent resistance in "Freedom Square" or "Kalinowsky Square" as it was named after the leader of the 1863 anti-czarist uprising, was perceived as "the revolution of free spirit"[16] and an outbreak of creative will realized by romantic revolutionaries, devoid of any interests and urged just by love for freedom.[17] Some camp survivors focused, in their reflexive self-search blogs, on the issue of personal choice with which they had been confronted,[18] and an author writing in the independent intellectual journal *Arche*, which is made possible through Western, support, recognized: "That which was happening and is happening in Belarus, has some metaphysical quality."[19] In his perception, the campers were like the great heroes of antiquity, whose courage and pure and noble spirit were beyond cold and rational logic.

The rest of the nation was declared too cowardly and loaded with material interests to rise for their human dignity. One of the first reaction texts at the Nashe mnenie (Our opinion) analytical blog juxtaposed the material and the disinterested: "In contemporary Belarus, again, we have a post-perestroika dilemma of 'freedom vs. sausage.'"[20] The phrase alludes to the Soviet metaphor of "sausage" which, at the times of deficiency of consumer goods, stood for consumer satisfaction and general well-being, and the author maintained:

> On the one hand, there are those who would stand day and night in the cold, bearing beatings and violations by police, or unbelievable lies about them in the state media. On the other, there are commoners, who would not even understand, what it means to be free.[21]

The view of lowly commoners, driven by their "stomach needs," was widespread. A journalist remarked in a Ukrainian newspaper: "The nation, for whom a piece of sausage is more important than freedom, can only be told: Bon appetit!"[22] An oppositional intellectual wrote:

> Really, one can hardly explain the value of freedom to someone, especially if the person does not want to feel it. One cannot explain the flavor of some exquisite food to those who have never tried the dish, or to render the feeling of a flight to those who are not capable of flying. Love for freedom is like a religious feeling. It cannot be explained rationally. But it can be "caught" from those who do feel freedom and long for it.[23]

Valeriya Novodvorskaya, a former Russian dissident, used, in a TV interview, the Polish-Belarusian word *bydlo*, which means "cattle," to name those who

"did not rise."[24] Historically, the word denoted both domestic animals and serfs and is extremely denigrating, because Belarusian peasants had been called *bydlo* by the Polish landlords. Thus the insult had both class and ethnic subtones, in fact characterizing the nation as slaves.

The "sausage versus freedom" metaphor was the first explanatory trope for the Belarusian civic division, but within the next year, the search for the roots of the nation's "apathy"—put differently, for the failure to mobilize a larger support base—resulted in academic articles, memoirs and documentaries.[25] All of them could only be created outside the official academia or public sphere and with support from international donors. The philosophical journal *Topos*, affiliated with European Humanities University, a Belarusian university currently "in exile" in Lithuania, published a special issue titled "Elections and Choice" ("Vybor i vybory"). Its authors, philosophers and scholars of culture, largely focused on the concept of freedom and the manipulative strategies of the state to control and brainwash the public.[26]

A special bondage, which resulted from the common experience of confronting injustice, became a recurrent theme ("Now, in 2006, it is the thirst for freedom and honor that unites us"), alongside with that of a noble cause. According to one political scientist, "Many used to doubt that freedom, just freedom, and not social issues, would become the mobilizing resource in resisting the Lukashenka regime."[27] Instead of structural positions, related to the categories of political economy, moral qualities emerged as a broad explanation for political and civic choices that flattered some authors. Unlike the "commoners," either brainwashed or not able to discern the true value of freedom, the allegedly disinterested intellectuals rose for European values and rights: thus, they emerged as legitimate moral leaders.

While there is no doubt that those declaring their love for freedom unconditional do believe it, they participate in the struggle for political power, which directly involves interests, as the above reference demonstrates. If, according to T. Adorno, identity is the ulterior form of ideology, there is usually something that people do not know about themselves, when they assume that others are self-serving, while they are not. As "freedom" seems to be the primary code-word in the intellectuals' thinking about themselves (they "value freedom" and stand for it, "freedom unites us against them," etc.), deconstructing the meaning with which this concept is entrusted in colored revolutions might prove helpful.

If post-socialist democratization is to be seen as an evolving process, then colored revolutions can be perceived as the "second wave" or a continuation of the negotiated revolutions of 1988 to 1989. They seek to change political regimes through a peaceful public protest, turning to the issues that have not been resolved with the disintegration of socialism or which arose during the transition. The Ukrainian scholar Tatyana Zhurzhenko argues that these revolutions were driven by the interests of business and

professional elites in normalizing brutal and "Darwinian" post-Soviet market for the former *nomenklatura* had used its social and political capital to reinvent itself as the propertied "class," too powerful to be constrained by law. Thus, colored revolutions, insisting on rights and rule of law, targeted post-Soviet "oligarchic" or "clan" capitalism.[28] According to Yaroslav Grytsak, to mobilize masses, the Ukrainian Orange Revolution resorted to the universalist and liberal rhetoric of dignity, human honor (cf. the discourse of "the revolution of spirit" in Belarus), and political transparency (instead of national language, culture and history, as was the case in 1991).[29] The successful revolutions resulted in establishing pro-Western governments and in the general Westernization and modernization of political and economic life through the use of the "rule of law" and "democratic standards." The question is then why these modern concepts did not work in Belarus or, put differently, what is the real nature of the division that was named "sausage vs. freedom." The intellectual failure to mobilize a revolution cannot be explained without an analysis of Belarusian internal social dynamics.

## FRAMING NATION AS CLASS

However infatuated might intellectuals be with their own role of disinterested social critics, they do not stand outside of society. Intellectuals are linked, as Antonio Gramsci argued in his *Prison Notebooks*, to real social actors, by their inclusion into a class structure and their participation within a particular social order.[30] Post-Soviet intellectuals in particular are bound with a new type of social stratification, resulting from an enormous social shift, post-Soviet and postindustrial at the same time. It overtly started with the disintegration of the USSR which, in popular imagination, is often linked to national issues. Alexander Yakovlev, one of Gorbachev's closest allies, stated during perestroika that nationalism "resurrects now and then, like a phoenix from the ashes. Hence, there must be some objective reasons for that."[31] Simultaneously some scholars of nationalism noticed a relationship between Soviet nationalist movements and the economic views of their proponents. Ernest Gellner and Roman Szporluk argued that the ideal of market economy was most strongly articulated "at the edges" (of the USSR), where nation-building had resumed, while socialist administrative methods were more characteristic of the Soviet imperial center.[32] Evidently, in late socialism, nationalism was intertwined with economic liberalism in some profound way, while intellectuals were the main articulators of both. To uncover the meaning of this relationship, I shall draw on the work of Ivan Szelenyi, an outstanding scholar of socialist intellectuals on their road to "class power," as he called their project.

Szelenyi established a connection between the discourse of human rights and civil society, which was pursued by Central European dissidents from the 1970s through 1989, and that of the (free) market. He argues that the notion of civil society, a crucial topic in dissident circles, was "simply a code to say "capitalism" when this idea was still taboo,"[33] as the term "civil" did not carry the baggage that "bourgeois" did, and thus was useful as a radical step on the road from socialism. Civil society stands for democratic participation and thus can serve to legitimize the propertied class, as only an economically independent man (a "bourgeois" and a citizen at the same time) could confront the (socialist) state as an autonomous actor. In the 1980s the process of making "Burgers" or "citizens" became a major theoretical and ideological issue in dissident theorizing, as it implied "the transition from subject to citizen as much as the making of the propertied class."[34]

In the USSR, the discursive role played by "civil society" in Central Europe was taken over by the rhetoric of nationalism, which resurrected during perestroika: "nationhood," "independence," and "national liberation" were used to code similar demands for a non-socialist economic and political system. The nation is a powerful symbol and can be used to legitimize different social regimes as being "better" for it, and thus discourses around national independence became a legitimate way for the emerging elites to argue for private property and the market as a more effective and fair system, much in the same way as civil society could be used to actually promote liberal capitalism. For example, Zyanon Paznyak, the founder of the Belarusian Popular Front, argued in his work "On the Empire and Property" that the abolition of private property, which makes the core of the Marxist project, deprives individuals of freedom and autonomy to turn them into dependent lumpen-proletarians.[35] He believed that only by restoring propertied individuals one could make them truly autonomous. Similarly, Paznyak argued, Soviet national republics, exploited and exhausted by Russia, would have a chance to establish fair economic relations only if they became independent, sovereign states.

This evidence is important for defining post-Soviet nation-building as a "class" project, which is related to the overt development of social inequalities that existed under state socialism into economic ones in the interests of the new "rising class": *nomenklatura*, state managers, or some educated specialists, for whom the Soviet system of resource allocation seemed too restrictive, as their power and resources resulted from their status, and not from ownership, and as such were insecure.[36] The project is also related—in complicated ways—to the activism of intellectuals, who were the main producers of liberal and nationalist discourses (and it was at that moment that they became concerned with the "quality of the population"), for producing a discourse turns intellectuals into recognized social actors. By nationalism, I mean sentiments and movements related to the status of

communities, which at some point begin defining themselves through national terms: perceived common history, origin, culture, destiny, language, and—most importantly—national oppression. Imagined national injustice, perceived in terms of Soviet occupation, language controversies, perished great culture, devastated nature, uprooted peasantry, annihilated nobility, disputed territories, and the exhaustion of natural resources, legitimized the claims of independence from "others," as they "occupied," "exhausted resources," "hampered the use of the national language," "killed national poets," "ruined national sacred places," "built their military bases," and so forth. According to Katherine Verdery, this was possible, because nationalities were the only organizational forms with an institutional history within the Soviet social universe and provided a principal base for alternative (to the socialist ones) formations.[37] Although the issue was in the market system of resource allocation, based on a different idea of social justice, the motive had to be something with which people could identify, and thus nationalism became the cultural resource capable of actually mobilizing the masses. The Russian publisher Boris Nemirovsky described in a radio interview how deeply moved he had been when in August 1991, right after the coup, Boris Yeltsin called his fellow countrymen "Russian citizens," instead of "comrades":

> I came back in 1991 and found myself in Moscow during the coup. On August 21 I was with the crowd defending the White House (Russian Parliament—e.g.) right at the moment when they raised the Russian "tricolour" for the first time instead of the red Soviet flag. And I roared as a bull, when Boris Yeltsin addressed us as "Dear Russian citizens," and I felt as if my life became "defined" at that moment. Many times after that I felt like I should give up this feeling and thought like—well, to hell with all that, but still would go back to it again and again. At that moment a lot in my life became redefined for good.[38]

In Belarus, though, the fusion of nationalism and anticommunism was never realized, which, as will be made clear later, is largely related to elite configuration: the nation seemingly "rejected" independent nationhood through electing Alexander Lukashenko as their president in 1994. He signed a not yet realized reunion with Russia into a common state, initiated and won several referenda on the issues of the state language (rejecting Belarusian as the only state language and reinstating the equal, but, in fact, dominant, status of Russian), national symbols (reintroducing the slightly modified Soviet ones instead of those which were "tinted" during WWII by fascist collaborators) and the prolongation of his presidency. Thus his politics was often interpreted as "antinational," and the civic division between his supporters and opponents (who argued for an independent "European belonging"), which became evident in March 2006, as the one over "lost

nationhood." Allegedly, for historical reasons common folks forgot their "true" national belonging and had problems identifying themselves as a nation: some became Russified, having adopted "metropolitan" identity, while others turned into "creoles."[39] In a similar way those denationalized subjects could not grasp "the value of freedom" and failed to rise for their human dignity.

I argued elsewhere that the Belarusian controversy is a "class" one, having at its core, rather than national issues, different methods of resource allocation—market or socialism—and the interests of some groups who benefit (or think that they do) from each of them.[40] Lukashenko has saved the centralized system of controlling and distributing resources and, having monopolized a fatherly concern for the people, he secured an almost socialist "welfare state" over which he has extreme power. He got a popular nickname of *bat'ka*, or "dad," for "paying" pensions and allowances, fixing prices on basic goods, introducing affirmative action on behalf of students from rural areas, preserving universal healthcare and lengthy maternity leaves, and—not least important—regularly imprisoning government officials of various ranks who allegedly tried to profit "from the people." In this system, "social justice"—satisfying the basic needs of those who do not have too many assets to be competitive in the market and thus were nostalgic of socialism—was exchanged for their loyalty. Lukashenko's initial social base included older people, the urban poor, countryside dwellers, and more women than men, that is, those who had felt marginalized by the early 1990s market reforms. In that system they do not have resources that are needed to realize "autonomy" and "rights' which, in the final end, are entitled to "burgers" or "middle class." The rejection of the liberal economic system initially took the form of the rejection of the "national" agenda, which was its symbol. But it was not language or culture per se that were rejected, but the new system of economic inequality, and thus the Belarusian division can be perceived as "class struggle" between the groups possessing different economic and—most importantly—cultural and "cognitive" assets. This division was largely predisposed by the former economic configuration with Belarusian industry focused on heavy and military production, a fairly satisfying (subsidized with Soviet petro-dollars) consumption pattern, and an extremely high proportion of "cosmopolitan" military men from all the former USSR within the population (the Republic was the Soviet "outpost"), who had no stake in the promotion of national issues.[41] Currently, power is in the hands of post-Soviet bureaucrats, many of whom are former villagers and the products of the Soviet educational and social system. As social stratification is fundamental to society, and in Belarus it initially took a "national" form, the nation makes a perfect case study for the scholars of post-Soviet, supposedly ethnic divisions and conflicts.

With time, national issues lost their political prominence (the fact recognized by the ideologues of the national cause), as the controversy was not really about what language to speak, but how to distribute resources.[42] The failure of the "jeans revolution" to mobilize larger society can be explained by the specific Belarusian social structure. By leveling economic inequality, Lukashenko "halted" class formation, and the broad antagonisms around which post-Soviet social discontent was built elsewhere, failed to be formed. First, there are not enough emerging agents, who would be both interested, as the owners of property and resources, in the autonomy from the state, which could push them to stand for their "human dignity," or, in other words, for a liberal and transparent system benefiting them as independent actors. Second, with reduced inequality, there could be no "oligarchs," that is, those very (post-*nomenklatura* semi-criminal) elites, *against* whom people's ire was targeted in the Ukrainian "Orange Revolution." Former communist *nomenklatura* and state managers were not able to transform themselves into propertied bourgeoisie to such an extent, as it had happened under political capitalism elsewhere. With most resources controlled by the state, and the president regularly and publicly curtailing the burgeoning capitalists "on behalf of the people," as soon as there is the slightest suspicion that someone might become too independent and, thus, a threat to his power, "oligarchs" could not be produced. Under moderate inequality (there are no super-rich or absolutely poor) and rigid state control, economic elites are dependent on the state and the government (of which they are often a part) and cannot confront it directly.[43] Lukashenko's supporters saw the goal of the "jeans revolution" in the promotion of economic inequality and bringing to power "greedy" capitalists.

It makes sense now to turn to the Belarusian "educated class" to consider their position within post-Soviet structuration. The disintegration of the USSR led to the fractuation of intellectual elite[44] and to at least one fundamental division: the division between those whose capitals remain bound with the slightly transformed state academia (and the bureaucratic positions they might have occupied there) and those whose new social, cultural, and cognitive capitals are invested into new "independent" academic and intellectual institutions supported by international donors.[45] These humanistic scholars embody a special habitus that became possible with the deconstruction of state control over the production of knowledge. Through participation in these institutions this intellectual faction is able, having shed state ideological restraints, to achieve the autonomy to enter prestigious international symbolic markets and to benefit from global intellectual exchanges.

Independent intellectuals and artists made a disproportionate part among those who rallied in the "Freedom Square." If this fact was ever noticed by experts, they tended to resort to love for freedom as an explanation for hu-

man behavior. It is important to remember, though, that intellectual cadres whose subsistence comes from institutional grants, personal fellowships, or commissions, and not state salaries, are both autonomous and interested to stand for civil rights and "freedom" (many of them demonstrated real courage and human dignity in this). This brings us back to the point of Yaroslav Grytsak, mentioned earlier in this chapter, who argued that the "Orange Revolution" resorted to the civic, rather than nationalist, rhetoric of dignity and honor.

If it can be argued that important participation by independent intellectuals in the "Freedom Square" is a sign that they are emerging of the Soviet collapse as a group with an interest, what "arguments" do they have then to negotiate their position in the new social order? This question takes us to the basic debates about intellectuals, which concern the nature of their social weight in society. Stanley Aronowitz, a contemporary leftist theoretician, asks if intellectuals can constitute discursive communities that generate unique subject positions, or whether they have to rely on social actors with real power to assert their status.[46] This issue is of special interest as regards post-Soviet intellectual actors, who are starting to develop an identity of interests in postindustrial age, where knowledge is believed to be a new productive force. I will consider these questions further below.

## ANXIOUS INTELLECTUALS

In the autumn of 2005 the Belarusian intellectual journal ARCHE published the transcript of a recent roundtable discussion that had been focused on the role of critical intellectuals in contemporary Belarus.[47] The panelists were the editors of several independent intellectual journals ("ARCHE," "Frahmenty," "Topos," "Palitychnaya sphere") and web magazines and some authors associated with them (me included), coming from two loosely defined and partially overlapping intellectual milieu. On the one hand, there were self-conscious and assertive Belarusian-speakers and the initiators of intellectual projects that emerged in Minsk in the 1990s. Many of them switched to Belarusian in a kind of a statement and a political act. They are perceived as the intellectual voices representing the post-Soviet Belarusian nation, and in this capacity are relatively well known among their Central European colleagues.

The other group was made of some Russian-speaking academics, affiliated with European Humanities University (EHU), which relocated to Lithuania and is supported by the European Commission and several major academic foundations, after the Belarusian government had closed it in 2004 for political reasons. The members of this second group are hardly known at Central European cultural markets, but publish their work in

American and European academic and Russian intellectual journals. Most of the panelists were fluent in English and German or French.

The moderator remarked that some time ago it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to imagine the two "opposing" national poles discussing a common topic at the same table. Academia and cultural production are the main points of symbolic confrontation between the two factions of independent intellectuals, and they were used to competition, rather than solidarity. But the topic was of common concern, and they turned to looking for common ground, and this demonstrates that they, in fact, share the position in social structure and play one common role in post-Soviet intellectual market, developing the paradigm of "new humanities" (postcolonial, cultural, or gender studies or their interdisciplinary combinations), that is, the disciplines which presuppose a "Western connection." This type of "new knowledge" is rarely institutionalized in post-Soviet state academia, and its proponents tend to be located in independent universities, research centers, or temporary projects, where their work is made possible with Western grants or fellowships, travel, publications, and conference support. The division between Russian-speaking and Belarusian-speaking "new knowledge" producers proves to be less and less important.

The roundtable where intellectuals were discussing intellectuals was a politically important event, but not a unique one: discussions, articles, essays, statements, and conversations attempting collective self reflection take place at Site belorusskogo intellektual'nogo soobshchestva (Belarusian Intellectual Community Website), Nashe Mnenie analytical blog, in the 2005 special issue of *Topos*, in *Nasha niva* independent weekly, and elsewhere.[48] The rise during the last decade of such discussions is more than just a Belarusian phenomenon: a similar trend is observed in Russia (where multiple publications focus on the role of intelligentsia or on the critique of post-Soviet philosophy or sociology), in Ukraine and, probably, elsewhere. This can be seen as cultural evidence of a distinct anxiety of some intellectuals over their own status. However salient had intelligentsia been for perestroika, arguing for democratic change (as it turned out, on behalf of the emerging class), their position in the new social structure is far from dominant. With the disintegration of Soviet order, intelligentsia was robbed of its legitimacy and its traditional (in the Russian universe) privilege to be moral and cultural arbiters. Russian sociologists Lev Gudkov and Boris Dybin recognized: "The period of intelligentsia' monopoly on the ideological and symbolic classification of reality . . . is over."[49]

Contemporary discussions of the nature of intellectual work and the intellectuals' role, besides being the vehicles of self-reflection and communicating an identity, have a public function, performative and political rather than reflexive, to negotiate a new group status and privilege. Not having any material assets, intellectuals have two interrelated options. They can

gain social power by establishing connections with other powerful agents, on whose behalf intellectuals might act: "new humanities" make a good example, as their academic legitimacy and, hence, the social weight of their explorers comes from the "West" as the locus of (cognitive, academic, or political) power. The second option is to claim power and privilege based on the intellectuals' own assets, which have to be discursively affirmed as their exclusive monopoly. The specific intellectual asset is "knowledge" or, rather, the hegemony that knowledge producers attempt to build by monopolizing it.

For the project to be successful, knowledge needs to be perceived as the capital that intellectuals possess exclusively and that endows them with a special vision. For example, a Belarusian sociologist sees the reason for the gender gap in voting (for Lukashenko) in a bigger number of elderly women than men. He believes that the elderly, for historical reasons, could not get good education and without it, they are not able to make the right voting decision:

> Gender per se is not important. The real reason is the following. Women—and this is how natural demography works—live longer than men, so there are more elderly women, than elderly men. . . . The most important factor is the educational capital. It allows one to critically assess information, first, and opens access to other sources of information, second. And in Belarusian social space these sources are distributed unevenly: the bigger the town, the more information sources are available. In the countryside, state TV dominates. On the other hand, education and age are related, for the elderly people did not have an opportunity to get it.[50]

Further on, the article builds a connection between access to the contemporary sources of information, especially the Internet—and this results from one's "educational level"—and voting against Lukashenko: those opposed to him are better educated to make the "correct choice." This explanation disregards that the very unequal access to information is involved with social inequality and accumulated capitals: those having an "Internet connection" possess other perks as well. They have more information, because they have different professions and status, more money, they live in bigger cities with more opportunities, and not in the countryside. In other words, they belong to a different social group and have more assets (age and education being some of them) to be successful in the market economy. They are in a different social situation even before they start having any access to information and assessing it, although intellectuals may fail to see it. "I have been amazed for some time now, an intellectural maintains, that a big group of Belarusians regularly, almost every day read Russian newspapers, for example, *Izvestia*. I never fail to ask these people: and why wouldn't you read the German *Zeit*, or the English *Times*?[51]

These views are quite revealing of the group interests of intellectuals, for deriving the "correct" voting choices from the capacity to "critically evaluate" information implies the right of those who "know" to guide others and even speak for them. For example, a Belarusian philosopher in the paper on the March 2006 events disregards any social issues or interests, insisting that the very juxtaposition of social-economic and political rights is a pseudo-problem. She believes that all citizens should just "want" to assert their rights, as intellectuals did in March 2006. Evidently not everyone will, and thus intellectuals need to be ready to do this work for other groups.[52] Another prominent philosopher, Valyantsin Akudovich, trying to rationalize the elitist position in one of his essays, argues that the oppositional message—that the "regime" is immoral and needs to be changed—although true, is meaningless for the nation at large, as "social province," as he names common folks, has its own values and a different lifestyle. He maintains that he is a writer and a philosopher, and thus freedom of speech is for him a "life or death" issue. But his parents, who live in the countryside and have not read a book since they finished high school, do not care about freedom of expression, because they have no stake in it. On the other hand, it would be a major deprivation for them, if their right to grow potatoes or to slaughter a pig for Christmas were curtailed. Thus, he concludes, "our values" are meaningless for those who make a living with their own calloused hands. Evidently, intellectuals and common folks have "very different scopes of responsibility," and he wished there would be more of "us" (intellectuals) to remove "the social province" to where it belongs and should be, for then the province would worry about the issues that are appropriate for them, and we would take care about those that belong to us.[53]

Akudovich is the most brilliant intellectual of his generation, deeply involved into theorizing the "fate" of the nation, and I remember reading the essay for the first time, expecting every moment that he is going to say that unless we make our values meaningful for those living through their calloused hands, our project cannot be either moral or legitimate. But he never did, having discursively translated epistemological hegemony into the right for political power. The exclusive intellectuals' right to "rule" according to the meaning that they give to reality is justified because the people "do not *know*": they are either too dumb to understand and appreciate the right ideas, or have no need in them. In Belarusian "democratic" media those on whose behalf intellectuals make democratic claims are seen as "zombied electorate,"[54] "social province"[55] (i.e., backward and opposed to progressive change), irrational "lumpens,"[56] plebians and primitives, having poor taste in art and leisure,[57] "crazy babushkas," irrationally lured to Stalinist principles,[58] passive and not capable of active and responsible behavior,[59] and driven by interests and not by the ulterior and abstract concepts of honor or freedom. It is often believed that Lukashenko was elected, because his

voters "do not know" and thus, a writer claims, we should not stay the "hostages of his collective-farmer's intellect."[60] In another post-Soviet example the famous Russian feminist Maria Arbatova, who wrote a book about her failed attempt to become a member of the Russian Duma explains, why she wanted to be a candidate from the "university precinct" of Moscow, the area with the highest number of voters with advanced degrees: "This is my main lure, for my feminist political program can only be appreciated in this precinct."[61]

In this type of post-Soviet discourse "correct choices" and "knowledge" itself do not emerge as social constructions and categories of power, created through a discourse and social action, but as objectively existing "truths," similar to the Hegelian absolute idea, which can be discovered or understood in the same way as the laws of nature. In March 2006 that objective truth must have been "freedom." Some attained it, being able to understand, and others didn't. By their very nature (being educated and producing knowledge), intellectuals turn out as those who would understand this "idea" best, but to maintain their knowledge monopoly, they need to prove that others do not know, that is, to produce a differentiation between "us" and "them," creating inequality through a discourse and claiming a "classed position."

Stanley Aronowitz used Althusser and Gramsci to suggest that "Science is a term we affix to ideology that wishes to become hegemonic."[62] If hegemonic ideology is disguised as science or knowledge, the latter, as a form of specific intellectual capital, becomes directly converted into power claims. If *intellectuals know* and if those who can ever *know* can only be intellectuals, a very important link, an "intimate relationship,"[63] as Ivan Szelenyi calls it, between knowledge and power gets established. Szelenyi draws from Michel Foucault and his theorizing of knowledge and power to show how both socialist and post-socialist intellectuals use knowledge as the vehicle of their own legitimization. To get power and resources, they need to persuade everyone that they are the ones who know: under socialism that was a rebellious idea, for it was the party that was supposed to *know* then. After socialism, though, these claims become legitimate and imply the autonomy of knowledge producers. As intellectuals resort to this strategy, they claim a privileged position for themselves and act as a group with an interest or a "new class," as scholars of postindustrial society (Richard Florida, Alvin Gouldner, Ivan Szelenyi, and others) tend to think of those who work with knowledge and information.

In contemporary writings on (postsocialist) intellectuals the term "new class," created by Djilas to include *nomenklatura* or bureaucrats, gets a new content. Intellectuals are sometimes seen as class or, rather, as those who attempt to become a class, because in contemporary social analysis a new understanding of class has emerged. After Marx, classes were seen

as collectivities (though his own understanding was more complicated). If this could be true for classical capitalism, with the advancement of "postindustrial" society with its multiple and complicated social divisions and delineations, classes come to be seen as the modes of differentiation which can be created through the use of different forms of capital or even through the power of the discourse. In this system, "people do not have to explicitly recognize class issues, or identify with discrete class groupings, for class processes to operate."[64]

As a broad organizing concept for the investigation of a wide range of issues associated with social inequality and social differentiation, "class" includes, after P. Bourdieu, matters of culture, lifestyle and taste. Different class cultures can be viewed as the modes of differentiation, and hierarchy emerges, when "others" are made the objects of "cultural shame." A journalist, who asserts in the oppositional newspaper that street concerts, carnivals, and rallies organized by the state to celebrate the National Independence Day, can only attract primitives and plebeians and there is nothing for a cultured person like him to see,[65] acts as a social critic and a judge of taste (the two intellectual roles, according to Z. Bauman). In this way he produces class difference, without directly applying the notions of economic inequality, as "cultural outlooks are implicated in the modes of exclusion and/or domination."[66]

Intellectuals usually see themselves as highly individualized actors and are unwilling to place themselves within a certain place in class structure or to recognize their class belonging. They tend to reject an inclusion with the propertied or powerful on the basis of the fact that they "do not have anything" of material value. At the same time, they construct a hierarchy by claiming a specific identity and using the power of defining others as culturally inferior. This is the strategy that connects social identity with the pursuit for domination, characteristic of some post-Socialist intellectual groups.

Knowledge, the main vehicle for intellectual legitimation, does not exist as an "objective truth" that needs to be discovered, extracted, and presented to the public. As M. Foucault has shown, it is constructed by actors with interests, who declare their ideas as science and condemn others as "ideology" or even illiteracy. As a constructed entity, knowledge cannot be legitimized "by itself" and needs a link to some external power. This makes intellectuals very vulnerable social agents: in their projects to convert knowledge into power, they always have to rely on "real power."

After the disintegration of socialism, "scholarly interests helped to foster cohesive communities with a sense of professional dignity and kinship with the intellectual community outside" the national borders.[67] For post-Soviet independent intellectuals, a link to that community or the presence in a common symbolic field with it is involved with the material support

of their work, their research projects, publications, the journals that they publish and the conferences that they organize (from this point of view, Belarusian intellectuals were not really sincere when they claimed to have been free of material interests). Interacting with donors always implies promoting their ideas,[68] at least in the Foucaldian sense, and thus intellectuals become involved into a social process that they can hardly escape. By the virtue of the social position from which they speak, they tend to articulate the interests of the "rising class," though they may be honest in believing that they have no other interests, but serving their nation and their people. Thus they may substitute the interests of the people they claim to represent by their own corporate interests, which result from their role in the field of symbolic production. These interests are rarely purely economic ones, but they are still tied to the economic opportunities, social capital and power.

Post-Soviet intellectuals have not been able to reach "class power" by becoming independent actors; whether they can really argue on behalf of the "people," remains to be seen.

## NOTES

1. David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 39.

2. Peter Berger, *An Invitation to Sociology: Humanistic Perspective* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963).

3. Gudkov Lev and Boris Dubin, "Ot avtorov," *Intelligentsia* (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Ivana Limbakha, 2009), 7–8.

4. See Andrei Sinyavsky, *The Russian Intelligentsia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

5. Alexander Gritsanov, "Nichego, krome zheludka," *BelGazeta* 28, no. 700 (2009): 21.

6. See, for example, Kastus' Bandaruk, "*Financial Times*: Tsi adbudzetsa jeansovaya revalutsia?" *Radyjo Svaboda*, March 16, 2006, www.svaboda.org/content/article/767947.html.

7. For an analysis of the March 2006 events see Elena Korosteleva, "Was There a Quiet Revolution? Belarus after the 2006 Presidential Election," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2 (2009): 324–46.

8. See *Novosti NISEPI*, *Vypusk* 2, no. 40 (2006), www.iiseps.org/bullet06-2.html.

9. The narratives of the events were later collected in D. Kostenko and A, Fox, *Kashko i dr. Partizanskaya respublika. Aktsii protesta v Minske 19–25 marta 2006 goda* (Moskva: ROO Centr "Panorama," 2006).

10. See www.ucpb.org/?lang=rus&open=13673.

11. See Pavel Starodub, "Lyudi ikukly," *Sovetskaya Belorussia*, March 23, 2006, sb.by/post/50508/.

12. The opposition appealed to Western governments, and the expelled students were accepted into Polish universities within the newly created "Kalinowsky program."

It has functioned since then, bringing young activists to Poland to study, in case they can prove persecution by the Belarusian regime.

13. For examples, see Alexey Krivolap, "Stabil'nyi crizis v nestabil'nom obshchestve," *Topos* 13, no. 2 (2006): 70–80.

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# IV

# REINVENTING HOPE

# 11

# The Demise of Leninism and the Future of Liberal Values

*Vladimir Tismaneanu*

> It seems to me that those who, however perceptive in other respects, ignored the explosive power generated by the combination of unhealed mental wounds, however caused, with the image of the nation as a society of the living, the dead, and those yet unborn (sinister as this could prove to be when driven to a point of pathological exasperation) displayed an insufficient grasp of reality.
>
> —Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*

> In our social experiment, the aggregate destructive and theoretical incongruity of Marxism were tragically combined, superimposed over one another, and many times reinforced. There was its essentially fundamentalist orthodoxy; the honest mistakes of true fanatics of making the people happy by force; the many centuries of authoritarianism in the way of life and consciousness; the criminality of the Stalinist ruling clan; the immorality and depravity of his heirs; and the heavy weight of the system created by him in all its hypostases.
>
> —Alexander Yakovlev, *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*

Twenty years have passed since the extraordinary series of events that led to the collapse of Leninist regimes in East and Central Europe.[1] This period has been filled by noble visions of truth, civil society, justice, and freedom, as well as by frustrations, neuroses, and painful disappointments. The struggle between residual Leninism and emerging and often beleaguered liberalism continues in most of the former Soviet Bloc countries. In spite of prevailing liberal democratic pronouncements and procedures, collectivistic passions, ethnocentric visions, and archaic nostalgias continue to

inspire and mobilize political and ideological activism. The once acclaimed anti-politics proposed by such authors as Václav Havel and George Konrad, considered to express the aspirations of a burgeoning civil society, seems now mostly forgotten. This does not mean however that the ideals of 1989 have vanished: they have evolved into the practice of normal democratic politics, with its often annoying banality. As former Polish dissident Adam Michnik put it: "Yet only democracy—having the capacity to question itself—also has the capacity to correct its own mistakes. Dictatorships, whether red or black, destroy the human capacity for creation; they kill the taste for human life, and eventually life itself. Only gray democracy, with its human rights and institutions of civil society, can replace weapons with arguments."[2] The most difficult task during postcommunism has been the reaching of a consensus over what is the good society. To paraphrase Ralf Dahrendorf, citizens of the East European countries are still searching for the meaning of their roles within the respective communities.[3] The present article deals with the political practices that developed in the region, after the demise of Leninism, as a result of the interplay between discourses on citizenship and nationhood.

Scrutinizing the post-1989 political, moral, and cultural dynamics, one is struck by the continuous tension between liberal and illiberal values. In many of the former Leninist states there are influential forces that still oppose the ideal of civic republicanism and promote exclusive, monistic visions of closed political communities (ironically, such positions are championed not only by ethnocentric populists and postfascists, but also by some successor post-communist parties, as in the case of the neo-Stalinist, anti-EU, and xenophobic Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia). Thus, the postcommunist landscape remains haunted by antiliberal ideological specters, including tribal collectivism, radical nationalism, and ethnocentric populisms. Unleashed in the name of civil society, "living in truth," and a "return to Europe," the revolutions of 1989 to 1991 liberated simultaneously democratic passions and commitments, and isolationist, xenophobic energies and resentments.[4] This syncretism has happened not in spite of Leninist legacies, but, on the contrary, as a result of communism's incorporation (hybridization) of nationalism into its ideological foundations, a trend inaugurated by Stalin and pursued by his successors (as brilliantly demonstrated by Robert C. Tucker in his *Stalin in Power* where he wrote about the "Bolshevism of the radical right").[5] Rather than freezing out nationalism, mature Stalinism developed a strong master-narrative of national authenticity and often institutionalized through their nationalities policies what Terry Martin coined as "Soviet xenophobia."[6] This ideological complex (neotraditionalism plus primordialism) was embedded into the civilizational blueprint that was brought into Eastern Europe during the process of Sovietization. It comes to no surprise then that certain commu-

nist regimes in the region went through periods on intense legitimization campaigns based upon political and cultural encodings of the nation (e.g., Romania from early 1960s, Albania, Bulgaria in the 1970s and the 1980s, Poland throughout the sixties, GDR in its last two decades of existence). Despite its presupposed internationalist appetite, communism prepared the ground for the nationalist binges of postcommunism.

In my view, the main ideological successor to Leninism and the principal rival to liberalism is ethnocentric nationalism. Besides the obvious historical reality that modern politics in the geographical space of the former Soviet Bloc had always been *national*(*ist*) politics, another element that points to ethnonationalism as Leninism's heir to ideocratic hegemony, is the fact that the latter was a "sacralization of politics." It was a political religion, that is, a member of the same ideological family with the idolatry of an organically, immutably defined Nation. Both types of political movements confer "a sacred status on an earthly entity and render it an absolute principle of collective existence, consider it the main source of values for individual and mass behavior, and exalt it as the supreme ethical precept of public life."[7] In other words, one could argue that, taking into account most of twentieth century tradition of conceptualizing power in Eastern Europe, the ideal of instituting a society on the basis of procedural norms and against a neutral backdrop of minimal rights and duties had little chances to materialize. On the contrary, a "thick" notion of citizenship based on ideals which require an allegiance to the community as whole because of a presupposed "pre-political commonness of its members" (Ulrich Preuss), seemed more likely to take shape. In the struggle between *Gemeischaft* and *Gesellschaft* the former had a considerable head start. After two decades of postcommunism, in what concerns the dominant visions of membership and identity in Eastern Europe, the results are mixed.

No political myth has proved to be more resilient, protean and enduring in the twentieth century than nationalism. A comprehensive and potentially aggressive constellation of symbols, emotions, and ideas, nationalism can also offer the redemptive language of liberation for long-subjugated or humiliated groups. It would be therefore simplistically misleading to reduce nationalism to one ready-made interpretation. Conductor Leonard Bernstein used to say that whatever statement one makes about Gustav Mahler's music the opposite is equally true. This is the case with nationalism, as well. It is often described as archaic, antimodern, traditionalist, in short reactionary. Other interpretations see it as a driving force of modernizing liberation, an ideology of collective emancipation, and a source of human dignity and pride. Overall, it can be said that nationalism "offers a kind of collective salvation drama derived from religious models and traditions, but given a new activist social and political form through political action, mobilization, and institutions."[8] Whatever one thinks of it, its ubiquitous

presence at the end of the last century and the beginning of the new one is beyond any doubt. The problem, therefore, is to find ways for reconciling it with the democratic agenda. Once the Nation becomes the master symbol of identitarian narratives, the structures of power and the regimes of knowledge are determined by *who defines* and *how are defined* the communalities perceived to represent the bedrock of that particular community of people. In other words: How can one tame that violent propensity that a Georgian political philosopher aptly called "the illiberal flesh of ethnicity"?[9] Can national symbols, aspirations, and sentiments become part of the ethos of a civil society? How can one reconcile liberal values and national sentiment in post-totalitarian societies?[10]

The roots of contemporary nationalism can be traced to the early days of the ideological age: the myth of the nation was created by historians, linguists, poets, and philosophers in the era when nation/states appeared to be the political units par excellence. If we take for instance Polish nationalism of the nineteenth century, it certainly had these romantic, salvationist, and redemptive components: deprived of statehood, Poles cherished an idealized vision of national community unified by unique traditions of heroism, martyrdom, and sacrifice. During that romantic stage, being a Pole was first and foremost a state of mind, not a biological determination. Later, during the twentieth century, this variety of romantic nationalism was increasingly challenged by a new, *volkisch*, concept of the nation rooted in common ancestry and ethnic bonds, primarily developed by Roman Dmowski, the founder of Polish modern, integral nationalism.[11] But the myth of Poland's unique status within the international community and her predestined mission has continued to impregnate both political discourse and practice, from Piłsudski to Solidarity.[12] Poles of course are not unique in celebrating this special link between their national destiny and the salvation of mankind. As formulated by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian nationalism had this strong Messianic dimension, linked to the belief that a nation has a predestined role in the relationship between God and humanity: "If a great people doesn't believe that the truth is only to be found in itself alone (in itself alone and in it exclusively)"; Dostoevsky wrote in his novel *The Possessed*, "if it doesn't believe that it alone is fit and destined to raise up and save all the rest by its truth, it would at once sink into being ethnographical material and not a great people."[13]

The nationalist myth owes its galvanizing power to its unique blend of scientific and emotional claims. It challenges the Marxian emphasis on class-determined human interests. It pretends to speak in the name of the nation "as One," as an all-embracing, transcendent totality, to offer compelling motivations for action, and no less impressive visions of the enemy. The crux of the problem is how nationhood is institutionalized as a cultural and political form. One can identify two (ideal) types of con-

ceptualization: liberals emphasize the civic bonds, whereas adamant nationalists focus on ethnic purity based on common origins and presumed common destiny. The former favor dialogue, tolerance, and inclusion; the latter champion forced assimilation, segregation, or exclusion of those with different ancestries and/or religious faiths. The competition between these visions cuts across every single political community and symbolizes one of the most tenacious contradictions of modernity. Furthermore, each camp is not homogenous. In post-Leninist countries, one encounters among the illiberal nationalists former communists, socialists, neofascists, traditional conservatives and populists committed to the search for a "third way" between communism and capitalism. What do all these groups have in common? Most likely, they share hostility to democratic, liberal, modern values (perceived as disruptively decadent and debilitating), and a common conviction that individuals should relinquish their rights in favor of collective sentiments, aspirations and interests. Their general ethos is based on the belief that the political should be experienced as *numinous* power. Subsequently, a secular entity (the nation) is perceived to impose religious-like fervor from its members as they place all their hopes for a safe and happy world in its hands.[14]

For example, think of the enduring fascination with Romania's interwar nationalist right and the intellectual magnetism exerted by figures the antidemocratic, profascist philosopher Nae Ionescu and his disciples Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, and even Jewish writer, author of a celebrated diary, Mihail Sebastian.[15] Obviously, each of these intellectuals deserves nuanced explorations of their convoluted intellectual itineraries. One cannot deny however that, in the 1930s, their writings contributed to the overall assault on reason, pluralism, tolerance, and democracy. In fact, Cioran himself admitted later that his philosophical youth had been inebriated with half-baked dreams of apocalyptical break with democracy. Espousing these thinkers' early and long-abandoned ideas in the aftermath of communism's collapse represents a form of intellectual regression and a failure to admit the responsibility of intellectuals (left and right) for the political and moral consequences of their philosophical choices.[16] The revolutionary nihilism of the far right and far left in Romania (but also in Poland or Hungary) needs serious scrutiny and calls for thorough reconsideration of the various competing trends within this country's political culture.[17] It is thus important to rethink the appropriation by the communist regime of some themes developed by the interwar right and the genesis of a self-styled version of "Romanian ideology" that combined Stalinism and Fascism. On the other hand, the liberal, or civic approach to nationalism is held by liberal conservatives close to the European Popular Party (the Democratic Liberal Party in Romania), Christian Democrats (as in the case of Slovakia), traditional Social Democrats, and even former communists

converted to the values of an open society (as in the case of Hungary and, to some extent, Poland).

A point that needs to be emphasized is that these two paradigms are related to prevailing values, traditions, and the development of civic institutions and mentalities. This factor explains why liberal values seem to get the upper hand in Central Europe, whereas the Balkans have been prone to ethnic strife, populist collectivism, and plebiscitary democracies. True, liberal and illiberal versions of nationalism exist in all these countries, but their impact is different in Romania and Serbia, compared to Slovenia and the Czech Republic.[18] The problem is how do the political and cultural elites use the existing symbolic capital and how do ideologically distinct political formations co-opt the nationalist rhetoric to suit their tactical goals. The postcommunist first wave of primordial passions and the appeals of the new exclusionary discourses remind us that neither the premises nor the outcomes of modernity have been universally accepted. This point was correctly raised by S. N. Eisenstadt in a pathbreaking analysis of the revolutions of 1989: "These problems, however, do not simply arise out of the breakdown of 'traditional' empires, the transition from some 'premodern' to fully modern, democratic society, or from a distorted modernity to a relatively tranquil stage which may well signal some kind of 'end of history.' The turbulence evident in Eastern Europe today bears witness to some of the problems and tensions inherent in modernity itself, attesting to the potential fragility of the whole project of modernity."[19] I think that in the first ten years of postcommunism we dealt with a resilient, persistent form of barbarism that, again, was situated in the very heart of modernity. Radical nationalism was the absolute exacerbation of difference, its reification, the rejection of the claim to a common humanity and the proclamation of the ethnonational distinction as the primordial fact of human existence. As tragically demonstrated in the former Yugoslavia, the revival of this specific form of politics can prove itself noxious to civic-liberal development of the postcommunist societies. In most of East and Central Europe ethnonationalism has warped, modified, and fundamentally altered the left-right ideological spectrum.

Usually, it is intellectuals who manufacture discourses that justify nationalist identifications and projections; then, in turn, the mobilized masses give these discourses the validation of practical realities. This is, to employ for a moment Bourdieu's terminology, a process of the naturalization of a nation-centered *habitus*, meaning a "system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representation." This way, nationalism, understood as both structures of power and regime of knowledge, is transformed into self-reproducing and self-referential reality. Nationalism becomes the "the obvious way of

doing and thinking about things."[20] The community ordered in such fashion will not only be "known and imagined; it will also be deeply felt and acted out."[21] While in the 1960s nationalism appeared at least in the West as an extinct myth, the end of communism and the new era of international ethnic conflict that followed the Cold War have made nationalism the main competitor to liberalism and civil society. Its main strength comes precisely from its ability to substitute for the loss of certainties and to offer immediate explanations for failure, confusion, and discomfiture. Nationalism caters to painful collective anxieties, alleviates angst, and reduces the individual to one lowest common denominator: the simple fact of ethnic belonging. At its core lies a revivalist myth (or, to use Roger Griffin's term, a palingenetic one). As many scholars have shown, such a myth is "an archetype of human mythopoeia which can express itself in both secular and religious forms without being 'derived' from any particular source or tradition." Its most important function is to provide the groups employing it in cultural and political practice with new sources of meaning and social function. The main danger inherent to its "activation" is that it can bring forth an "organically conceived nation [that] is to be cleansed of decadence and comprehensively renewed."[22]

Romanian exiled writer Norman Manea, who survived the Holocaust as a teenager only to be later persecuted because of his Jewishness and nonconformist ideas under the Ceauşescu regime, gave a powerful description of this ethnocentric temptation as the main rival to the civic vision of the community associated with modernity and liberalism:

> The increased nationalism all around the world, the dangerous conflicts among minorities in Eastern Europe, and the growing xenophobia in Western Europe emphasize again one of the main contradictions of our time, between centrifugal, cosmopolitan modernity and the centripetal need (or at least nostalgia) for belonging. . . . The modern world faces its solitude and its responsibilities without the artifice of a protective dependency or a fictive utopian coherence. Fundamentalist and separatist movements of all kinds, the return of a tribal mentality in so many human communities, are expressions of the need to reestablish a well-ordered cohesion which would protect the enclave against the assault of the unknown, of diversity, heterogeneity, and alienation.[23]

Ethnic nationalism appeals more often than not to primary instincts of unity and identification with one's own group: foreigners are often seen as vicious destabilizers, dishonest breakers of traditions, agents of dissolution. Nationalism, indeed, sanctifies tradition which was once described by Gilbert K. Chesterton as the "right to vote granted to the dead people." Especially in times of social frustration, foreigners tend to be demonized and scapegoated. A Ukrainian nationalist, for instance, would see Russians (and/or Jews) as forever conspiring against Ukraine's independence

and prosperity. A Romanian one would regard members of the Hungarian minority as belonging to a unified body perpetually involved in subversive and irredentist activities. A Croatian militant nationalist would never trust Serbs, while Serbian ethnic fundamentalists would always invoke Croatia's alliance with Nazi Germany as an argument against trust and ethnic coexistence. Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian nationalisms are colored by the memory of the Soviet (and previously Russian) occupations of the Baltic states. National discourses serve not only for preserving the sense of ethnic identity, but also to continuously "reinvent the tradition," regenerate the historical mythology, infuse an infra-rational, transcendental content to the sense of national identity. Under conditions of imperial collapse, nationalism becomes an ideological balm used to placate sentiments of despondency and rage.[24]

With its shattered identities and wavering loyalties, the postcommunist world offers a fertile ground for delusional xenophobic fantasies to thrive and capture the imagination of millions of disaffected individuals. National homogenization becomes the battle cry of political elites for whom unity and cohesion are the ultimate values. The Leninist exclusionary logic ("us" versus "them") has been replaced by the nationalist vision that sanctifies the ethnic in-group and demonizes the "aliens." Those who criticize this trend are immediately stigmatized as a "fifth column" made up of "inside enemies." For the late Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, for instance, it was only the intellectuals supportive of the "national spirit and self-determination" who deserved the name of intelligentsia. All others, he maintained, were just "Pharisees."[25] This statement could be endorsed by the former Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban, or at least by some of his close advisors (historian Maria Schmidt among them). This continuous invention of enemies and hatreds aggravates the climate of insecurity and makes many honest individuals despair about the future of their societies.

The fact that almost everybody in the postcommunist world pays lips service to democracy does not mean that liberal values are prevailing.[26] On the contrary, the past twenty years produced incessant appeals and campaigns for discovering "the navel of the nation" (Gellner). Liberalism has been counterpoised with political practices of safeguarding collective values perceived by certain elites to define across time and space the national community. Liberalism in this context was presented as an ideology that suppresses ethnic differences and group identities, rather than an institutional and cultural effort to diminish and organize these distinctions "just enough to increase the chances for peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation."[27] Such Manichaeistic politics of identity served only to legitimize the new prophets of Arcadia. Consequently, keeping in mind the collectivist slippages of politics in some of the Eastern European countries, it can be argued that the democratization process is dependent

on the capacity of these societies' citizens to transcend their particularistic traditions and group identities and built up a sense of political belonging rooted in norms derived from civic interaction. The issue is not to abolish *any* tradition, but rather to rediscover the virtues of tolerance, inclusion, and dialogue.

The new constitutions adopted in the postcommunist states locate the source of state sovereignty in the majority ethnic nation, rather than in the individual citizen. They are ethnic-oriented and potentially discriminating against minorities. Because of these practices, for instance, more than one third of Estonia's population was barred from participating in the 1992 elections. Anthropologist Robert Hayden calls this variety of postcommunist reification of the ethnonationalist domination granted to the ethnic majority to the detriment of the minorities, constitutional nationalism.[28] Constitutions are used to enshrine the sovereignty and privileges of the dominant nation, whereas the minorities' complaints are often treated as anti-national behavior. They are yet to provide the standards for a post-conventional identity.

Contemporary ethnic nationalism is less a resurrection of the pre-communist politics of intolerance, but rather as an avatar of the Leninist effort to construct the perfectly unified body politic.[29] To be sure, the past is often used to justify the resentful fantasies of the nationalist demagogues. This "return of history" is, however, more of an ideological reconstruction meant to respond to present-day grievances than a seemingly primordial destiny of these nations cursed to continuously fight with and fear each other.[30] As these societies move away from the Leninist order, nationalism has emerged as the prevailing ideological myth. Whether this post-communist nationalism will become civic or will turn into vicious chauvinism, is too early to forecast.[31]

## COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM

With its internationalist vision, Marxist Communism strove to overcome the limitations of national consciousness. "The proletarians have no homeland," the founding fathers of the doctrine proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto*. They were wrong and internationalism turned out to be a utopian program.[32] In reality, as the collapse of the German left has shown twice in this century (first in 1914, then after Hitler's takeover in 1933), proletarians do have a homeland and they are ready to die for it as arduously as the members of any other social group. In the name of the national interest large masses were mobilized into collective hysteria, suicidal uprisings and catastrophic wars. During World War I, the cult of *la patrie et les morts* (the fatherland and the dead ones) was more than a

poetic metaphor: it provided millions of French people with the belief that fighting the Germans was a sacred cause. In the same vein, pan-German nationalism combined with pseudoscientific racism (the doctrine of the *volkisch* community) served as a main ingredient for Hitler's doctrine of imperialist expansion.

At the same time, Joseph Stalin's appeal to Russian nationalism and Hitler's scorn for the Slavic "inferior race" enhanced the enthusiasm of the Red Army and the Russian people in the antifascist struggle (the "Great Patriotic War"). In accordance with his Russian national Bolshevik creed, Stalin articulated war goals in terms of national survival, and even some of the most adamant anti-Bolsheviks closed ranks behind the "little father of the peoples" to defend the holy Russian soil.[33] Some authors called this representational practice epic revisionism. The regime, by means of *re*making sense of the past, alters existing identitarian narratives. This process gains the dimension of *statecraft* for it modifies the outlook of the community itself.[34] Under the circumstances, "the centrality of the proletariat is lost," as the focus now is on the "moral-political unity of Soviet society." The socialist collectivity becomes a *popular* community "organized into a state, to which all individuals, all art and all science should dedicate themselves" and "expected to operate as a self-reliant, more or less closed unit in the world at large." The language and politics of the revolution remain in place, but the polity is renationalized.[35]

In 1948, it was nationalism that helped Josip Broz Tito build up the anti-Stalinist consensus in Yugoslavia and the ideology of "national communism." Democratic national ideals inspired Polish and Hungarian revolutionaries in their anti-Stalinist struggles in 1956. Nationalism has been the corrosive force that led to the break-up of last colonial empire, the USSR.[36] No less significant, it has been the legitimation for power-thirsty Third World self-appointed saviors to posture as "national redeemers."[37] Some communist dictators understood that their stay in power would be guaranteed by resort to nationalist rhetoric. Romania's Nicolae Ceauşescu or Albania's Enver Hoxha knew how to present their autarchic regimes as reincarnations of millennia-old dreams of independence. Even the less eccentric Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov initiated nationalist campaigns meant to glorify the Thracian heritage. The whole propaganda system under Ceauşescu was set in high gear to present him as the reincarnation of the Dacian and Thracian tribal chieftains who had resisted Roman invasions.[38] Whether these leaders did indeed believe the nationalist myths they operated with were less important: what is significant is that such discourses offered the individual the sentiments of pride, security, and unity so coveted for in times of traumatic dislocation. Indeed, as the Leninist utopian creed faded away, nationalist discourses have (re)entered the scene, ready to fill in the apparent ideological void. Precisely because the social space

appeared ominously unpredictable, with weak civil societies and still inchoate political parties, individuals invested their aspirations for solidarity and belonging into the nation.[39] The celebration of the community as the ultimate reservoir of human dignity and the downplaying of individual rights are usually associated with the exaltation of military virtues, the cult of the state, latent or manifest clericalism, and the persecution of independent thinking. Mythologized history becomes the alibi for state-sponsored discriminations, exclusions, and violence.

This strange synthesis of national ambition with ideological monism explains the intensity of nationalist passions in the postcommunist world: ethnic exclusiveness is a continuation of the Leninist hubris, of its adversity to anything smacking of difference, uniqueness, or otherness. Antiliberalism, collectivism, and staunch anti-intellectualism blend together in the new discourses of national self-aggrandizement (consider this mixture as it inspires the attacks on "left-leaning" liberals by Viktor Orban and his conservative-populist associates). At the same time, the recollection of the times of oppression under the communist regimes is used to bolster a sense of uniqueness. Suffering is often exploited to justify a strange competition for what I call the most victimized nation status. No less important, because communism was seen by many as an alien imposition, a dictatorship of "foreigners," contemporary radical nationalism is also intensely anticommunist. The memory of trauma and guilt under Leninism, along with the duty of remembrance regarding some of these countries' fascist past, can indeed provide the historical and moral benchmarks necessary for sustaining a constitutional patriotism that can challenge communitarian reductionism. It can nurture a solidarity of memory based upon negative contrasts: "on the one hand, with the past that is being repudiated; on the other, with anti-democratic political actors in the present (and/or potentially in the future)."[40] Instead, we are witnessing an ethnicization of memory and an externalization of guilt. The evils of the communist regimes are assigned to those perceived as *aliens*: the Jews, the national minorities, or other traitors and enemies of an organically defined nation. Or, we encounter the "mismemory of communism" that creates "two moral vocabularies, two sorts of reasoning, two different pasts": that of things done to "us" and that of things done by "us" to "others." This is what Tony Judt called "voluntary amnesia."[41]

Ironically, the nationalist zealots are often former communists for whom the internationalist veneer of the old ideology had always been an embarrassing and shallow ritual (the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia has championed intense anti-Roma stances). Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation combines nostalgic Leninism, admiration for Stalin's leadership during World War II, and xenophobia. No surprise therefore that Zyuganov and other neo-Leninists vehemently

opposed the proposal made in October 2005 by a Putin aide to remove Lenin's body from the Red Square Mausoleum.[42] As for Putin himself, he has abandoned the Yeltsin era's adamant anti-Leninism and has become, especially since 2006, the proponent of an increasingly aggressive version of neo-Stalinist and neoimperialist restoration. The high school history textbook (dealing with the period 1945 to 1991) commissioned by the Kremlin and published in 2008 symbolizes the return to some of the most egregious Stalinist falsifications and a radical break with the legacies of glasnost.[43] Putinism is therefore an ideological conglomerate bringing together Great Russian nationalism, imperial authoritarianism, and a search for restoring the lost grandeur of the Stalin era.

Minorities, especially ethnic ones, are thus the perfect candidate for the targeted figure of the enemy. Nations are presented almost universally as victims of foreigners, and the communist regimes are described as engineered by aliens to serve foreign interests. Russian nationalists, including some of the most gifted fiction writers belonging to the "Siberian School," have not tired to blame the Jews for the Bolshevik destruction of the traditional values and structures. Needless to add, some of the most frantic propagandists for such dark visions are former communists themselves, including a number of former communist intellectuals. Writing primarily about the tragic events in his native Yugoslavia, American poet Charles Simic strikes a depressing and unfortunately much too true note when he observes: "The terrifying thing about modern intellectuals everywhere is that they are always changing idols. At least religious fanatics stick mostly to what they believe in. All the rabid nationalists in Eastern Europe were Marxists yesterday and Stalinists last week."[44] Several years before the end of communism in Europe, Joseph Rothschild argued that "ethno-nationalism, or politicized ethnicity, remains the world's major ideological legitimator and delegitimator of states, regimes, and governments."[45] Since nationalism provides the most energizing of the identity myths of modernity, a more powerful and vivid one than either Marxist socialism, liberal universalism, or constitutional patriotism, one need to see what its main forms are in the postcommunist world. Is nationalism a fundamental threat to the emergence of politically tolerant structures? Is it necessarily a poisonous form of chauvinism, a new totalitarian ideology, a destructive force intrinsically inimical to liberal values? Are these societies hostages to their past, doomed to eternally reenact old animosities and conflicts? In reality, one needs to distinguish between varieties of nationalism: the inclusive versus the exclusive, the liberal versus the radical, or, as Yael Tamir proposes, the polycentric versus the ethnocentric.[46] Ethnocentrism is a form of nationalism that turns the real distinction between the in-group and the others into an insuperable attribute, a fact of destiny that places one's nation into a superior position to all the other ones. Under postcommunist circumstances, this ethnocentric, rather than the liberal version of nationalism tends to get

the upper hand. Distrustful of any rational analyses, it appeals to sentiment, affect, and emotion. Truth-content is practically irrelevant in such narratives bound to foster dignity and self-pride. Beliefs, values, mores are thrust into the straitjacket of a specific "regime of truth" that produces and sustains a specific power alignments. The social framing of nationalism crystallizes into "ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements."[47] It therefore acquires the function of universal truth. Idealized interpretations of history turn into identity markers because they provide us with gratification, satisfaction, perceived magnitude, and they create a sense of authenticity.

In the economy of this essay, I propose the following definition of radical (illiberal) nationalism: it represents an inflated, often self-serving and self-centered assessment of one's ethnic group virtues, merits, misfortunes, presumed historical mission and, by implication, a denial of other groups' similar rights, sufferings and aspirations. It is clear that I do not include benign or liberal versions of nationalism within the limits of this definition. It bears upon integral visions of the nation as the repository of communal virtues, a sacred entity that requires endless devotion and selfless sacrifices from its members. According to this vision, one is either born a Serb (or a Hungarian, or a Russian) or one is not. In other words, this view precludes the possibility of one becoming a member of the nation, no matter what the individual is ready to do in order to achieve this status: religious conversion, outstanding literary performance, readiness to enroll in the army and fight for the "Fatherland," and so on. Below, I propose a minimal typology of nationalism in postcommunist societies that does not squarely reject the trends toward national assertiveness as long as these do not involve exclusiveness and intolerance:

A. *Civic nationalism* recognizes individual rights as fundamental for the construction of a liberal order and locates the sovereignty of the people in the defense of individual rights for all members of the political community, regardless of ethnic origin and any other differences.[48] It highlights a post-traditional and postconventional identity and the possibility of multiple identity frames of reference (not only ethnic, but also civic ones). It is a "soft" form of nationalism rooted in the democratic traditions, be they conservative, liberal, or social democratic. This vision allows for nationality to be acquired and rejects the "genetic" definition of ethnic belonging. It is not xenophobic and stresses the need for inclusion and tolerance of minorities. Especially in countries with such a turbulent history, this trend should be seen as a constructive development, rather than as an alarming threat. It offers the individual a minimal sense of security (protection) and belonging to a community in times of dashed illusions and axiological tremors. A characteristic of this form of national affirmation is its primarily cultural-civic dimension

and a refusal to accept the jargon of extreme nationalism. Liberal (civic) nationalism recognizes the preeminence of the moral person, the elective dimension of personal identity, and refuses to see the individual as a prisoner of his or her communal belonging. In a certain sense, to the extent that it does not exalt the superiority of the national ideal over any other one, and it does not sanctify the nation as the ultimate and indisputable source of human identity, liberal nationalism can be seen as "postnationalist." It values reflection over emotion, and it insists on the autonomy of human will and choice. It comes closest to the Habermas's vision of *Verfassungpatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism) founded on a postconventional identity derived from abstract, inclusive, and increasingly universalist forms of political belonging.[49]

B. *Ethnic, less liberal or illiberal nationalism* encompasses different trends whose common feature is the collectivist interpretation of the nation, the exaltation of tradition and traditional institutions, the cultivation of heroic mythologies of the past, and a certain distrust of Western liberal values as "alien" to the local communal ethos. By postulating the common will of the "People" as the supreme national value, this version of nationalism paves the way for authoritarian experiments. It is always a minority that claims to be in the know, to have the right (or mission) to interpret this collective will, and to impose its vision of the less "enlightened" masses.
   1. Conservative nationalism is often associated with Christian democracy and folk traditionalism. While its proponents formally recognize the importance of individual rights, they tend to exaggerate the role of the past, the influence of the church, and the nefarious impact of Western mass culture and liberal institutions. In many cases, these groups and parties praise premodern values, especially the agrarian communal bonds, and lambast the role of financial capital and industry in destroying the pure ethnoreligious community. Whether they confess it or not, conservative nationalists have a serious grudge against liberalism, which they portray as soulless, atomistic, and mechanical. The sovereignty of the people as a whole prevails in this view over the rights of the individuals.
   2. Ethnocentric populism has developed primarily in the Balkans, but is also notable in other postcommunist countries (especially in Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine). Its background consists of the stressful coexistence of a beleaguered and still unarticulated civil society and a proto-pluralist institutional system, on the one hand, and the survival and even thriving of the former repressive institutions, including the secret police, on the other. Populist ethnocentrism is neither left, nor right: it handles political slogans without any concern about their long-term impact, and switches policies in accordance with the

immediate interests of the power elite. The ethnocentric populist leader allies himself with the extremists, co-opts them into the ruling coalition, and then, when Western pressures intensify, he gets rid of the already useless former partners, posturing as a rational and reliable politician. Deep in his heart, however, he remains convinced that Western-style capitalism is neither possible nor desirable for his country.[50]

Ethnocentric populism is chauvinistic, conspiracy-obsessed, and includes a slightly disguised attempt to rehabilitate the communist regime.

3. Nostalgic ethnocentrism is characterized by the ideal of "national democracy," or ethnocracy, (as opposed to liberal democracy) and the attempt to rehabilitate the interwar extreme right movements. This is the case with attempts to resurrect the Fascist Iron Guard in Romania or similar movements in Hungary (the "Magyar Guard"), Russia (Eduard Limonov's National Bolsheviks), and so on. In the 1930s, the Guardist ideologues stated that only born-Orthodox individuals could claim to be truly Romanians, attacked the legacy of Enlightenment as "sentimental nonsense," and advocated a radical revolution against liberal modernity. Latter-day partisans of this direction are programmatically vague regarding the form of government it advocates (republic, constitutional monarchy) and have voiced consistent distrust of the existing political movements and parties (seen as opportunistic, corrupt, intellectual, non-Romanian in their lack of interest in the real problems of the Romanians). Sociologically, this ethnocentric revivalism appears as a generational movement of anguish and discontent, appealing primarily to high school and university students as well to recent graduates. In the same vein, one notices the attempts to define ethnic belonging in terms of religious affiliation and the growing interference of the Catholic Church in Poland's political debates.[51] To be sure, the rise of ethnoreligious fundamentalism in Romania is closer in both program and significance to similar movements in Russia and Serbia (these countries are predominantly Orthodox) than to the clerical-authoritarian trends in Poland. What these religious nationalist trends share, however, is the common dislike of liberal values, individual rights, secular education, and market competition.

## CONCLUSION: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY OR ETHNOCRACY?

For many intellectuals in Eastern and Central Europe, the rise of nationalism in the aftermath of communism's collapse came as a surprise. After

all, the "glorious revolutions" were, with exception of Romania, peaceful and gentle. Their dominant discourse was imbued with references to the universal rights of man and citizen. It was a rediscovery of the values of Enlightenment in a space once plagued by ethnic exclusiveness and authoritarian fundamentalisms. Then, as the euphoria of emancipation dissipated, individuals realized that they needed a source of self-confidence, an ideological substitute for the vanished certainties of the communist era. With the appeals of the discourse of civil society and human rights subsiding and the costs of transition affecting large social groups rising, these countries experienced a search for new ideas that would offer the intellectual and moral cement all societies need in order not to fall apart.[52]

Actually, the appeals of the civil society paradigm, as championed and articulated within the dissident subcultures of the post-totalitarian order, were to a great extent idealized during the first postrevolutionary stage. Many intellectuals shared these values, but there were many who found them too abstract and universalistic (among the latter, Václav Klaus, Havel's rival, nemesis, and successor as president of the Czech republic). The majority of the populations in East-Central Europe had not been involved in the anti-systemic activities and had not appropriated the values of moral resistance. Years ago, Hungarian philosopher and former dissident G. M. Tamás insisted on the relative marginality of the dissidents as an explanation for their lack of influence after 1989.[53] The case of Solidarity was, of course, different, but even there the normative code of civic opposition failed to generate a positive concept of the "politics of truth." In reality, dissent, in most East-Central European societies, was an isolated, risky, and not necessarily popular experience. Those belonging to the "gray area" between government and opposition tended to regard dissidents as moral challengers, neurotic outsiders, Quixotic characters with little or no understanding of the "real game." The appeals of the civil society vision, with its repudiation of hierarchical structures and skepticism of any institutional authority, showed their limits in the inchoate, morally fractured and ideologically fluid post-communist order.

One of the key elements in interpreting the rise of nationalism as a political myth in postcommunist societies is the role of intellectuals and their relationship with the West. In Central Europe, there has always been a strong Westernizing wing among the national intelligentsias. The fact that, with few exceptions, the mainstream contemporary Hungarian intellectuals have not drifted toward the populist right is thus connected to their acceptance of the most important lesson of the twentieth century, namely that the main conflict has not been between communism and fascism, but rather between collectivistic regimes and ideologies (of rightist or leftist persuasion) and liberal individualism. The sad consequences of endorsing one or another totalitarian political religion (communism or fascism) has not

passed unnoticed in Central Europe, whereas the same can hardly be said about the Balkans with their cyclical pageants of nationalist excitement. True, in each of these countries there are liberal and illiberal visions of the nation. But whereas in Poland, for instance, the demythologizing exploration of the past has been a major endeavor of the intellectuals, in the Balkans the trend has been to cover up the shameful pages of national history and to fabricate new messianic, self-indulging fantasies. This deleterious, self-destructive tendency has somewhat subsided in recent years, especially as a result of the internalization by local elites of the catastrophic costs of promoting institutionalized hatred. The word fantasy is used here to refer to an ensemble of collective visions and emotions bound to offer explanations for the main difficulties of the transition. In this respect, radical nationalism appears as a fantasy of escape, a political myth whose sociological and psychological underpinnings lie in widespread sentiments of insecurity, fear and helplessness. The truth of these fantasies is not the issue, because in the case of myths what matters is their credibility rather than their accuracy: "Myths are . . . believed to be true, not because historical evidence is compelling, but because they make sense of men's present experience."[54] And when this experience is perceived as painfully intolerable, when psychological disarray reaches a climax, the need for myth becomes irresistible. What the nationalist myth offers is consolation, the bliss of community, a simple way to overcome feelings of humiliation and inferiority, and a response to real or imaginary threats. Furthermore, the nationalist explosion can be seen as a "perverse effect" of the revolutionary changes unleashed by the revolutions of 1989 to 1991. This is not to say that the revolutions failed, or that they created situations worse than those supposed to have been overthrown. The "reactionary rhetoric" ignores that nationalism survived during the communist years in distorted and surreptitious ways, that it had permeated the official doctrines, and that the revolutions of 1989 to 1991 only created the framework for its full-fledged expression and possible transcendence.[55]

The world after Leninism is one marred by broken dreams, shattered illusions, and often unfulfilled expectations. This explains the defeat of former communists in Poland in September 2005: perceived as cynical operators, the former apparatchiks lost to center-right parties that advocated a "moral revolution." In brief, the battle for the soul of man after communism has not ended. In some countries, discomfiture and dismay have prevailed. In others, individuals seem to enjoy the new conditions, including the opportunity to live without utopian dreams. To quote Alexander Yakovlev, the former Bolshevik ideologue turned apostate:

> Social utopias are not harmless. They deform practical life, they push an individual, society, state agencies, and social movements into imposing their

> approaches and concepts, including the use of extreme methods of force. Social utopias deprive a person of the ability to perceive the reality of actual features. They sharply reduce or sometimes even completely destroy people's ability to withstand effectively the real difficulties, absurdities, and defects of private and public life.[56]

The denizens of the former communist-dominated social and political universe have paid dearly for learning the costs of applying, on their souls and bodies, coercive policies inspired by ideological hubris. For most of them, grandiose ambitions to reconstruct humanity according to presumably perfect designs (ethnic or social) sound both hollow and dangerous. The return of social utopia can be prevented if two fundamental elements of the Leninist legacy are overcome: anomy (which led to fragmentation, neotraditionalism, uncivility) and lie (which was the root for dissimulation, the disintegration of consensus, and ostentatiously brought forth what sociologist Yuri Levada once called *homo prevaricatus*, the heir of *homo sovieticus*). Since "forewarned is forearmed," I do believe that it is better to look into the real pitfalls and avoid them, rather than play the already obsolete, pseudo-Hegelian tune of the "ultimate liberal triumph."[57] The whole philosophy of dissent was predicated on the strategy of the long "penetration" of the existing system, the gradual recovery and restoration of the public sphere (the independent life of society) as an alternative to the all-embracing presence of the ideological party-state. The successful reconstruction of the life of a nation from the ruins of tragedy and destruction caused by a criminal regime depends upon the capability of a society to build upon foundations of trust between free individuals. During postcommunism, the authenticity of existence can only be regained though civic empowerment and unwavering rejection of both the temptation of ethnocentric narcissism and that of the chosen agent of history.

## NOTES

1. For a recent analysis of the enduring significance of those world-shattering developments, see Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009). Also my contribution "The Revolutions of 1989: Causes, Meanings, Consequences" in the thematic issue of *Contemporary European History* 18 (2009): 271–88. The issue was coordinated by John Connelly and Amir Weiner. Other contributors are: Charles Maier, Jeffrey Kopstein, Marci Shore, Mark Beissinger, Silvio Pons, and Andrew Michta.

2. See Adam Michnik, *Letter from Freedom: Post–Cold War Realities and Perspectives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 326

3. Ralf Dahrendorf, *After 1989: Morals, Revolution, and Civil Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

4. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Nationalism, Democracy, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

5. See Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York: Norton, 1990), 591. For an overview of the literature on the Leninist legacies see Grzegorz Ekiert and Stephen E. Hanson, *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Assessing the Legacy of Communist Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Vladimir Tismaneanu, Marc Howard, and Rudra Sil, eds., *World Order after Leninism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

6. Erik van Ree, "Stalin as Marxist: the Western Roots of Stalin's Russification of Marxism," in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Sarah Davies and James Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 159–80. Also see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

7. Emilio Gentile and Robert Mallett, "The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1, no. 1 (2000): 18–19.

8. Quoted in Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (New York: Pearson Education, 2005), 170.

9. See Ghia Nodia, "Rethinking Nationalism and Democracy in the Light of the Post-Communist Experience," in *National Identity as an Issue of Knowledge and Morality: Georgian Philosophical Studies*, ed. N. V. Chavchavadze, Ghia Nodia, Paul Peachey (Washington, D.C.: Paideia Press and the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 54.

10. See Cheng Chen, *The Prospects for Liberal Nationalism in Post-Leninist States* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

11. See Andrzej Walicki, "The Troubling Legacy of Roman Dmowski," *East European Politics and Societies* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 12–46.

12. See Marcin Frybes and Patrick Michel, *Après le communisme: Mythes et légendes de la Pologne contemporaine* (Paris: Bayard, 1996).

13. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, quoted by Czesław Miłosz, in his illuminating essay "On Nationalism." See Czesław Miłosz, *Beginning with My Streets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), 85. Miłosz's essay is one of the most perceptive interpretations of the recrudescence of nationalism at the end of the twentieth century.

14. Gentile and Mallett, "The Sacralisation of Politics," 29.

15. See Marta Petreu, *Diavolul şi ucenicul său: Nae Ionescu-Mihail Sebastian* (Iaşi, Romania: Polirom 2009).

16. See Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past: E. M. Cioran and the Rise of Romanian Fascism* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004); Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries," in Edith Kurzweil, *A Partisan Century: Political Writings from Partisan Review* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 383–92. Philosopher Sorin Lavric interprets Constantin Noica's attraction to Iron Guard ideology as a form of "demonization" in his important book *Noica şi Mişcarea Legionară* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007). For Eliade's trajectory, see Florin Turcanu's remarkable intellectual biography *Mircea Eliade: Le prisonnier de l'histoire* (Paris: La Decouverte, 2003).

17. A recent illustration of the revitalization of nationalist discourses centered around the liturgical awakening of Romanians see Ovidiu Hurduzeu and Mircea

Platon, *A treia forță* (Bucharest: Logos, 2008) along with interviews and articles published in Romanian by Mircea Platon (history Ph.D. student at Ohio State University). Platon champions an organic-collectivistic notion of the national community and spells out strong reservations regarding liberal-civic interpretations of the nation. One of his favorite targets was my book *Fantasies of Salvation*. His views are widely distributed on fundamentalist blogs including at least one that disseminates staunch anti-Semitic stances.

18. For Ceauşescu's use of illiberal nationalism in constructing a sense of national cohesion and mobilization against presumed enemies (internal and external), see Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)

19. S. N. Eisenstadt, "The Breakdown of Communist Regimes," *Daedalus* 121, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 35, reprinted in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *The Revolutions of 1989* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

20. For a discussion of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* in the context of the analysis of nationalism see Paul Warren James, *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back* (London: Sage, 2006), 55–57.

21. Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of the Nation* (London: Routledge, 1998).

22. Roger Griffin, "Introduction: God's Counterfeiters? Investigating the Triad of Fascism, Totalitarianism and (Political) Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 305.

23. See Norman Manea's contribution in "Intellectuals and Social Change in Central and Eastern Europe," special issue, *Partisan Review*, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 573–74.

24. See Ilya Prizel, "Nationalism in Postcommunist Russia: From Resignation to Anger," in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*, ed. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2000), 332–56.

25. For the politics of intolerance in Tudjman's Croatia, see Goran Vezic, "A Croatian Reichstag Trial: The Case of Dalmatian Action," *Uncaptive Minds* 7, no. 3 (Fall–Winter 1994): 17–24.

26. For the meanings of liberalism in postcommunist societies, see Jerzy Szacki, *Liberalism after Communism* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 1995), and Ronald Dworkin et al., *From Liberal Values to Democratic Transitions: Essays in Honor of Janos Kis* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004).

27. See Stephen Holmes, "Liberalism for a World of Ethnic Passions and Decaying States," *Social Research* 61, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 601.

28. See Robert M. Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism in the Former Yugoslav Republics," *Slavic Review* 51 (1992): 654–73.

29. See Claude Lefort, *La complication: Retour sur le communisme* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), and Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Lenin's Century: Bolshevism, Marxism, and the Russian Tradition," *Partisan Review*, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 408–14.

30. See S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); Roman Szporluk, ed., *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

31. For the essential distinction between the legitimate attachment to national cultural heritage and language and the desire to make one's nation more civilized, on the one hand, and the "rapacious and potentially totalitarian nationalism" which implies an "idolatrous belief in the absolute supremacy of national values when they clash with the rights of persons who make up this very nation," see Leszek Kołakowski, "Uncertainties of a Democratic Age," *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 49.

32. Israeli political philosopher Shlomo Avineri correctly remarked that this cosmopolitan slogan did in fact reflect the real cognitive situation of a certain class of people: "not the proletarians, but the multitude of modern, educated deracinated Jewish intellectuals, without whom a revolutionary movement would have been unthinkable in Central and Eastern Europe." For these secularized Jews, Zionism and Bolshevism became the two magnets in their attempt to solve the same problem of identity and radical emancipation. See Shlomo Avineri, "Reflections on Eastern Europe," *Partisan Review*, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 447.

33. "Russian National Bolshevism, as it emerged and developed under Stalin in the 1930s, advanced in a direction which was in a sense convergent with German National Socialism. Strange and odious as such a development would have seemed, and did seem, to the Old Bolsheviks (perhaps that, too, explains their extermination), the convergence cannot be denied. It seems to me to be historically established and well documented." See "A Choice of Lenins?" an interview with Robert C. Tucker, in *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World*, ed. G. R. Urban (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 170. For Stalinism's resurrection in the form of ultra-nationalist neo-Bolshevism, see Stephen Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 48–73.

34. Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger, eds., *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

35. Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin—a Study in Twentieth-Century Patriotism* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 189.

36. See, for instance, Walter C. Clemens, *Baltic Independence and the Russian Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

37. For an illuminating analysis of "charismatic saviors," see André Reszler, *Mythes politiques modernes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981), 188–205; Gerard Challiand, *Mythes révolutionnaires du tiers monde: Guerrillas et socialismes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979). This is also the case of Hugo Chavez's "Bolivarian Revolution" in Venezuela.

38. See Adrian Cioroianu, *Ce Ceausescu qui hante les Roumains: Le mythe, les représentations et le culte du Dirigeant dans la Roumanie communiste* (Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2004).

39. See Katherine Verdery, "What Was Socialism, and Why Did It Fall?" in Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, 63–88.

40. Jan-Werner Müller, *Constitutional Patrotism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 97–119.

41. Tony Judy, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Post-War Europe," *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 163–66.

42. See C. J. Chivers, "With Lenin's Ideas Dead, Russia Weighs What to Do with Body," *New York Times*, October 5, 2005, A1 and A6.

43. See Leon Aron, "The Problematic Pages," *The New Republic*, September 24, 2008, pp. 35–41; Arkady Ostrovsky, "Flirting with Stalin," *Prospect*, September 2008, pp. 30–33.

44. See Charles Simic, "The Spider's Web," *The New Republic*, October 25, 1993, p. 19.

45. See Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 14.

46. Yael Tamir, "The Enigma of Nationalism," *World Politics* 47, no. 3 (April 1995): 430.

47. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

48. Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 11.

49. Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

50. On the history of the term "populism," as part of the Russian radical tradition, see Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," in his book *Russia Observed: Collected Essays on Russian and Soviet History* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1989), 103–21. For a thorough analysis of different meanings and incarnations of populism, see Guy Hermet, *Les populismes dans le monde: Une histoire sociologique XIX–XX siecle* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

51. See Piotr Ogrodzinski and Henryk Szlajfer, "Is the Catholic Church a Threat to Democracy in Poland?" *East European Reporter* 5, no. 3 (May–June 1992): 17–20.

52. See Martin Krygier, *Between Fear and Hope: Hybrid Thoughts on Public Values* (Sidney: ABC Books, 1997); see the special issue of the quarterly *East European Politics and Societies* 19, no. 3 (Summer 2005), dedicated to the role of ideas in postcommunist politics, with excellent contributions by Venelin Ganev, Hilary Appel, Valerie Bunce, Georgy Ganev, and Karen Dawisha.

53. G. M. Tamás, "The Legacy of Dissent," in Tismaneanu, *The Revolutions of 1989*, 181–97.

54. See Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: PallMall, 1972), 124.

55. For a refutation of the "reactionary" rejection of change, see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

56. See Alexander Yakovlev, *The Fate of Marxism in Russia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 165.

57. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998).

# 12

# "Politics of Authenticity" and/or Civil Society

*Ivars Ijabs*

The contemporary revival of the concept of civil society is to a great extent due to the dissident intellectuals of Central Eastern Europe in the 1980s. Thinkers like Václav Havel, Adam Michnik, and others not only revitalized the term, but also provided in their writings certain understanding of civil society. Nevertheless, civil society, or rather its weakness, is also regarded as one of the main problems of the region today. Values that are commonly associated with civil society today, like pluralism, individual autonomy, rule of law, and democratic accountability, seem to give way to populist, xenophobic, and illiberal tendencies. It can be asked whether the legacy of dissident intellectuals has something in common with these tendencies, and what their role might be in the shaping of knowledge models of the post-transition period. My thesis in this chapter is that a common element can be found in a particular perception of civil activity. I propose to call it "politics of authenticity." This consists of a wide intuition that the political involvement of civil actors must be based on some form of personal truthfulness of the actor. To demonstrate this I have chosen early political works of Václav Havel, who, being one of the most prominent and deep-minded dissident intellectuals, devotes much attention to the authenticity of civil actors. To recognize the specific traits of his conception, it is useful to compare it to the theory of authenticity developed by a Western thinker, namely, Charles Taylor. In the last chapter I will try to show how elements of "authentic" self-understanding of pretransformational civil actors can be linked to the weakness of civil society in Central Eastern Europe today.

## 1

European revolutions of 1989 to 1991 have sometimes been characterized as atheoretical in the sense that they weren't motivated by any revolutionary theory.[1] That may be true, if "revolutionary theory" means something like the doctrines of Marxism or Maoism. But it doesn't mean that the intellectual background of these upheavals has been irrelevant for the developments themselves. On the contrary, the theoretical presuppositions of this first experience both influenced and mirrored those models of political knowledge that directed the participants' actions.

One of the focal points of this influence concerns the concept of civil society. Originating in classical Western political theory, the term experienced a revival in the writings of Adam Michnik and other dissident intellectuals already during the late 1970s.[2] In the 1980s it became widely accepted as a catchword for democratization movements in the region. At the same time the discussion about civil society gradually gained popularity also among Western political thinkers. Authors like John Keane, Andrew Arato, and others tried to inject a new life into this ostensibly old-fashioned concept. The situation changed after the definite breakdown of the Soviet Bloc and the establishment of democratic regimes in the region. In Central Eastern Europe, civil society has seemingly served its turn—there is no need for antitotalitarian slogans in free societies. In the West, on the contrary, the concept of civil society became widely used and discussed in different contexts and levels. There are elaborated conceptions of civil society that involve this concept in the debates of moral and political philosophy. They see it not only as an empirical variable or as a catchword, but as a significant element of Western political thought, which can serve as a source of common norms and identities. The theory of Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato must be mentioned here.[3] These authors interpret civil society as the sphere of free communication and discursively validated norms that must preserve its autonomy against encroachments of capitalistic economy and state bureaucracy.

There are also significant communitarian versions, like that of Michael Walzer, who sees civil society as the site of rebirth of community values in pluralist Western societies.[4] Irrespective of theoretical controversies, however, the concept has regained its place in the political language with quite definite meaning. Civil society means pluralistic and free civic associations, sustained by free individuals, and generating cooperative and tolerant attitudes among citizens, as well as supplementing the official politics with grass-root initiatives and critical discussion.

Taking into account this definition, one can clearly see that the concept of civil society is returning to Central Eastern Europe in the negative form. Associational life is rather passive; individual rights and tolerance often

give way to ethnic communalism and xenophobic populism. The situation is ironic: Central European dissident intellectuals revived the concept itself; nevertheless civil society is widely regarded as one of the key problems in the region today. This paradox allows asking a question about the proper shape of dissident political conceptions. What is the role of their intellectual legacy for the further development of civil societies in the region? And is there any substantial link between the past glory of civil society and its present weakness?

Some authors have suggested that the search for such links is superfluous. It has been argued that the choice of concept in Central Europe has been purely accidental, without any theoretical considerations.[5] There is also a view that its use by dissidents signals only an anachronistic desire for the imaginary return to the social conditions of the early liberal era.[6] Finally, it has been argued that borrowing of this term by the Western political theory has been misguided, since it "evades the real political challenges at the end of the twentieth century."[7] However, the situation is more complicated. The Central European concept of civil society is neither a replica of the Western tradition nor an oppositional slogan, chosen by accident. The dissident concept of civil society has distinct features that, being different from the later adaptations in the West, could help explain certain tendencies of the post-transformational situation. These features and differences can be seen in the perspective of a particular knowledge model, which I call politics of authenticity. This consists of a broad intuition that political activity of civil actors is based on some relation, more authentic, truthful, and genuine, than "official," professional party politics. Civil society presupposes a more direct, more humane, and more authentic participation, and this authenticity makes civil society into a specific juncture of morality and politics. However, I am not going to argue that all conceptions of civil society can be reduced to this one dimension. Conceptions of civil society usually are multidimensional. Nevertheless the dimension of authenticity often constitutes their core—from Václav Havel's "living in truth" to Jürgen Habermas's civil society as a life-world of authentic communication.

In order to demonstrate the conception of authenticity prevalent among Central European dissident intellectuals, I will use the political writings of Václav Havel. This choice calls for some justification. To emphasize the political work of Václav Havel doesn't mean ignoring other prominent dissident thinkers, like Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, Václav Benda, Mihai Şora, and others. However, it is Havel's famous essay "The Power of the Powerless" that deals prominently with politics of authenticity, and it is widely recognized as one of the main documents of dissident thought. This essay was influential not just among Czech and Slovak dissidents. According to one of the leaders of "Solidarity," Zbigniew Bujak, it also gave the "theoretical underpinnings" for the activity of the Polish independent trade union.[8]

Havel's fascinating writing style, as well as his later experiences after the collapse of communism, makes him a suitable representative for certain trends in Central European conceptions of civil society.

In order to demonstrate the particular features of the Havelian conception, it is useful to compare his views with those of a Western thinker, Charles Taylor. Coming from different theoretical backgrounds, both Havel and Taylor posit the fate of individual authenticity in the modern world at the center of their reflections. They see their respective political conditions in the broader context of modernity, which opens new opportunities for individual autonomy and, at the same time, threatens it. For both thinkers, civil society is the societal sphere where authenticity can find its expression in political and cultural emancipation. At the same time the question of civil society involves not just political but also moral significance: both Havel and Taylor regard civil society as the sphere of shared values and mutual understanding. Though differently, they address the moral or "absolute" dimension of civil action and its significance for the modern world.

## 2

Every political theory is developed in a certain sociohistorical situation. Intellectuals who formulate influential ideas are acting in a particular historical setting, and the power of their ideas depends on the existing knowledge and power relations in society—even if they exercise "the power of the powerless," as Central European dissidents did. The period when intellectuals like Havel, Michnik, and others formulated their ideas about civil society and authenticity was not marked by totalitarian terror and omnipresent fear. Rather, it was characterized by a deep split between the official Leninist façade and everyday consciousness. This gap was filled with bitter skepticism and indifference toward public life in general. The repressive machinery of the state, however, was strong enough to hit everyone who would dare to call into question the ideological monopoly of the Communist Party. There was limited room for autonomy and free communication in private life; the public sphere, on the contrary, was dominated by a stifling ideology and the empty rituals of the party. Early theoreticians of civil society addressed this gap between the public and the private existence. The concept promised to fill the gap with authentic human relations, which would preserve the direct and genuine communication of the private life, being at the same time politically influential as a counterweight to the oppressive, bureaucratic state. The old Hegelian dichotomy of civil society and the state was reformulated by Central European dissidents: the state is an irredeemably repressive, hypocritical, and inhuman machine, and the civil society—the

authentic sphere of individual initiative, creativity, and cooperation. Here the concept of civil society conflates here the factual reality—the inhuman, authoritarian, communist state—with a normative ideal that promised free and authentic human relations.

Havel's contribution to the Central European discourse of civil society is widely known. His brilliant phenomenology of life in the post-totalitarian[9] communist regime, based on deception and self-deception, is contrasted with "living in truth," which involves individual authenticity, the breaking of the rules of a deceitful game.[10] But Havel does more than this. He tries to show how "living in truth" can serve as a basis for political activity.

The words "true," "authentic," and "genuine" are often used in Havel's political writings. But, being rather a man of letters rather than an academic philosopher, Havel doesn't give any precise definitions. "Living in truth" is a complex idea, based on a deeply personal experience. It consists of an individual's conscious refusal to accept any demands of what Havel calls "manipulative systems"—primarily systems of post-totalitarian communism, but also those of anonymously operating capitalist democracies. This refusal is based on an individual's relation to her own conscience, which represents the truth. For Havel, this relation is the basis of all authenticity in human relations. He gives the famous example of a greengrocer who individually refuses to put the meaningless slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!" in his shop window:

> In this revolt the greengrocer steps out of living within the lie. He rejects the ritual and breaks the rules of the game. He discovers once more his suppressed identity and dignity. He gives his freedom a concrete significance. His revolt is an attempt to *live within the truth*.[11]

This attitude is the basis for every civil action. To be authentic in this sense involves listening to one's "inner voice," which is infallible and comes from some transcendent source, from humanity itself, or from the Absolute. In post-totalitarian systems it involves a denial of all "official" politics that are fundamentally manipulative and untrue. Havel shows the peculiarity of post-totalitarian regimes, where authentic civil action consists not of public challenging of the legitimacy of the regime, but rather of the moral rebirth of an individual's private conscience. The denial of politics in the name of an individual self-responsibility is the only political action possible in civil society. Self-isolation of an individual actually becomes a political obligation, because a meaningful social action can be based only upon private inwardness of the actor:

> A genuine, profound and lasting change for the better . . . can no longer result from the victory (were such a victory possible) of any particular traditional political conception, which can ultimately be only external, that is, a structural or

> systemic conception. More than ever before, such a change will have to derive from human existence, from the fundamental reconstitution of the position of people in the world, their relationship to themselves and to each other, and to the universe.[12]

Nevertheless, one may ask how these changes could be enacted if the individual listens only to his conscience? In the case of the greengrocer it is quite obvious, what to "live within the truth" means—it means simply to refuse to commit a clearly insincere act of putting the slogan in the shop window. But not all situations are like that. People have very different opinions of what would be the most "true" thing to do.[13] So it doesn't seem credible that the authentic and autonomous actions of multiple individuals will lead to any reconstitution of the position of people in the world. Havel answers this question by referring to the transcendent moral order:

> The essential aims of life are present naturally in every person. In everyone there is some longing for humanity's rightful dignity, for moral integrity, for free expression of being and a sense of transcendence over the world of existences.[14]

The members of society are also integrated vertically, with the help of their inward relation to the common source, to the absolute, or to the "order of being." Civil society is thereby grounded in this substantive relation, and its life is successful to the extent that all individuals are capable of this authentic relation. The truth permeates between the people like electricity—it is not a matter of discussion, but rather of revelation. Therefore political action in civil society is conceived in overtly moral terms:

> Values and imperatives must become the starting point of all our actions, of all our personally attested, openly contemplated and ideologically uncensored lived experience. We must trust the voice of our conscience more than that of all the abstract speculations, while contriving no other responsibility that the one to which that voice calls us.[15]

If civil society is conceived in this manner, as a strong value community based on direct personal experience, one can easy see how Havel came to his conception of societal self-organization. Havel believes in small, informal communities, based on face-to-face relationships. President Havel's defense of local self-government in polemics with Prime Minister Václav Klaus clearly echoes this conviction (cf. Pontuso 2002). Havel's conception to some extent resembles the visions of 19th century anarchists:

> structures that are not aimed at the "technical" aspect of the execution of power. . . . There can and must be structures that are open, dynamic and small;

> beyond a certain point, human ties like personal trust and personal responsibility cannot work. . . . These structures should naturally arise from *below* as a consequence of authentic social self-organization.[16]

In such communities, true and personal relations can be sustained, and this is the only form in which civil society is "authentic." From today's perspective, this view may seem explicitly antimodernist. In Tönnies's terms, it seems reducing all *Gesellschaft* to the *Gemeinschaft*. The ties of civil society don't cross the limits of personal relations and responsibility. Solidarity is based on face-to-face relationships, and these, in their turn, are based on "authentic" relation to some transcendent entity. It is not clear how this kind of authenticity, based on private, apolitical experience and moral commitment, could serve as a basis for civil action in pluralist democracies, where people are guided not only by different subsystems of society, but also by different values and life projects. Nevertheless, Havel recognizes that this emphasis on individual morality and authenticity is particularly characteristic of the Central European understanding of civil society, which is based on the experience of manipulative post-totalitarianism. There is actually nothing else people could do. All official, public politics is degraded as inauthentic, so the only goal of civil action is to preserve individual moral integrity vis-à-vis the hypocritical communist system. Moreover, all the attempts to play the game by the rules of official politics are regarded as inherently inauthentic, as an action depriving the individual of her "true" relations with others.

## 3

At the first glance Charles Taylor's concerns are significantly different from those of Václav Havel. What he is looking for are the sources of modern individualism, as they appear today in the dominant ideal of individual self-fulfillment. Taylor disagrees with those authors who denounce the contemporary Western "culture of self-fulfillment" as profoundly relativist, hedonist or narcissist. According to Taylor, they don't

> seem to recognize that there is a powerful moral ideal at the work here, however debased and travestied its expression might be. The moral ideal behind self-fulfillment is that of being true to oneself, in a specifically modern understanding of that term.[17]

This ideal stands at the center of the "ethics of authenticity," which, in Taylor's view, has characterized the Western culture since the eighteenth century. Authenticity is by no means a simple phenomenon. In his earlier work Taylor refers to the Romantics, Rousseau, and the theories of moral sense to

show the privileged moral status that has been attributed to the absolutely unique "voice within" in this tradition.[18] What we see here, is a similar relation of being or remaining true to oneself. In Taylor's conception, as in Havel's case, the moral status of an action depends on the actor's inward relation to her inner being. Nevertheless, this kind of authenticity is different. It is tied to the consciousness of the uniqueness of an individual:

> Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the modern ideal of authenticity, and to the goals of self-fulfillment or self-realization in which it is usually couched.[19]

According to Taylor, the ethics of authenticity gives the clue to very different phenomena in the modern societies. On the one hand, the ideal of authenticity can lead up to self-centeredness, disregarding all the moral ties that bind us to our family, our community, our history, and our environment. These are well-known problems of the contemporary Western world, and Taylor sees them as illegitimate, one-sided pathologies of authenticity. On the other hand, authenticity itself is a valuable resource for individual moral autonomy, a basis for self-exploration and self-responsible choices. Taylor's thesis is that being authentic in the proper sense involves a horizon of shared meanings, which cannot be defined solely by oneself. Authenticity thus involves some form of community, which is perceived noninstrumentally. The self-centered version of authenticity, which tries to suspend all externally given horizons, is actually vague and flat, because it cannot give the individual any support for his authentically chosen identity. One can make autonomous and authentic choices, but one cannot define by herself, what is meaningful for her.

But, Taylor argues, in the age of authenticity this horizon of values cannot be taken for granted, as it was in earlier periods of history. It has to be constantly recreated by the processes of mutual recognition and dialogue. The relation between authentic self-fulfillment and its moral context has become disenchanted and problematic. In his other works Taylor illustrates this point by the reference to civil society, for example, by talking of the markedly "secular" character of the liberal public sphere.[20] What we see in this idea of authenticity is the conception of individual self-fulfillment, which takes place within the horizon of moral values that are created collectively by subjects and perceived as "objective." The individual remains at the center, and her authenticity depends on her inward relation to herself. But this self is conceived as communicatively constituted. Being authentic implies not only being true to one's own deepest convictions, but also to expose one's own identity and convictions to the dialogue. Like Havel, Tay-

lor also sees the real civil action bound to some "higher," nonindividualist order of the world. His example is the activities of green movements, which emphasize the moral responsibility of humankind and are directed against the utilitarian view of nature. Nevertheless, this approach differs from that of Havel: new forms of moral community are developed, taking into account the individualized nature of authenticity. Morality must find its resonance in an autonomous, self-realizing individual. The moral intuitions must be grounded not directly on some transcendent order, as for Havel, but on its resonance with the individual identity.[21]

Despite the differences between both conceptions of authenticity, there are also significant similarities. First, the emphasis on authenticity bases the civil action on individual responsibility—and not on tradition, class membership or any other option. Second, this emphasis also indicates the fundamental equality of the actors. Nobody can be "more" authentic than another, although different people can make different uses of this inward relation to themselves. In this sense the equal status of every human being's authenticity is at the core of the idea of modern democracy. Havel's conception also belongs to the Western tradition described by Taylor. It also forms a part "of the massive subjective turn of modern culture, a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths."[22] The "true" relation to oneself in both conceptions is seen as the basis for all wholesome social relations.

However, the differences are more telling. They become clear, if one looks at the consequences of both views of authenticity for modern, democratic and pluralist civil societies. At the center of Taylor's conception stands the self-realization of an individual. The actions of this individual are authentic insofar as she remains faithful to her moral autonomy, at the same time being aware that her authentic self is located in the objective context of commonly asserted values. In the age of authenticity the moral order "is accessible through personal, hence 'subjective' resonance."[23] Reciprocal interaction and mutual understanding, which can serve as a basis for civil society, are closely tied to the self-realization. One can develop authentic identity, that is, realize herself, only as far as this identity is recognized as meaningful by "significant others." So dialogically structured civil society is a necessity for people when they want to realize themselves. Self-realization demands the normative context, which in modern societies is created largely by individuals themselves. Taylor's conception of civil society reformulates Alexis de Tocqueville's classical conception of voluntary associations: people join associations not because it promotes stability of a democratic regime, but because associations can give a meaningful context and framework to their own individuality.[24]

There are no elements of individual self-realization in Havel's writings of the pre-transformational period.[25] Self-realization obviously involves the

confidence that the self will have some predictable future, common with others. The authenticity of civil society in communist regimes, however, doesn't provide for such confidence: the future is always endangered and unclear because of the repressive Leninist state. The future of the self is insecure; therefore its authenticity is not bound to self-realization. When Havel writes about "living in truth," it involves just *living*, and not making individually unique plans and realizing them. And, since the individual cannot be sure of any possible future for herself, she doesn't think of her authenticity as dependent on societal intercourse. Authenticity is not to be found in a dialogue, as it is for Taylor. Its real, genuine source is individual conscience as a direct, inward link to the Absolute.

One can see the specific nature of authenticity in communist societies: to remain faithful to one's true being, one must listen to her own conscience. It is implicitly assumed that individual conscience cannot lie. Other people can, and they inevitably do in post-totalitarian communist systems. Therefore individual conscience is the primary and determinant source of authenticity there. This doesn't mean that relations with fellow-citizens are unimportant or fundamentally inauthentic. Havel writes on the importance of

> A new experience of being, a renewed rootedness in the universe, a newly grasped sense of "higher responsibility," a new-found inner relationship to other people and to the human community.[26]

But the "inner relationship to other people and to the human community" comes after the "new experience of being" and "the sense of higher responsibility," that is, an individual's inward relation to her conscience. Authenticity in civil society is possible insofar, as it is sanctioned by this individually unique source. The relation to others is authentic if it is grounded in some assumed moral concord, which is "inwardly" given to the participants.[27] There is no indication that the conscience can be delusory, or that the inner voice depends on social interaction. On the contrary, it is the only relation that can be trusted absolutely. A dialogue and mutual understanding in civil society is not a basis for authenticity; a dialogue is possible and meaningful only if the authenticity in the form of participants' consciences has already been established. Havel's authenticity is monological rather than dialogical. It stems from an individual's inward relation to some instance in herself that represents absolute morality, and not by interaction among individuals. There is a consensus among members of civil society, and this consensus is brought about not by communication, but, rather, by their genuine human consciences.

This consensus is created in post-totalitarian societies by opposition to the existing regime, which is widely regarded as untruthful, mean and corrupt. It is easy to find a common ground for civil action, as far as

people agree to act at all. They don't need to discuss their fundamental values—their consciences tell them the right thing. Havel's analysis is convincing when he shows the hypocrisy throughout the ideologized communist system:

> Individuals need not to believe all these mystifications, but they must behave as though they did, or they must at least tolerate them in silence, or get along well with those who work with them. For this reason, however, they must *live within a lie*. They need not accept the lie. It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it. For by this very fact, individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, *are* the system.[28]

When hypocrisy is so all-encompassing, the truth behind it must also be conceived as one great moral ideal, which is accessible to everyone through the medium of conscience. Havel himself mentions several cases when even the highest officials of the Czechoslovak communist regime acted only "as if" they really believed in the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism. If everyone (or nearly everyone) is supposed to behave hypocritically, one can also suppose that all people have also some shared conception of what "nonhypocritical" or "authentic" means. This authenticity serves as a basis for common morality, which speaks to individuals through their consciences.

## 4

It is now possible to return to the comparison of both types of authenticity in their relationship to civil society. In Havel's opinion, authenticity in civil society is oriented toward a predefined, transcendent moral order, which is given inwardly, as the voice of an individual's conscience. In this sense, the moral basis for civil action is absolute: it doesn't tolerate any restrictions. For Western thinkers, exemplified by Taylor, authenticity depends on an individual's involvement in a specific social context, which makes her self-realization meaningful. The moral background of civil action is rather situative—it must take into account the different orientations of different individuals who all carry out their self-realization projects in their own authentic ways.

These differences are telling. Civil society in Central European communist countries perceived themselves as movements with a strong moral mission. As Zbigniew Pelczynski notes on "Solidarity," it

> was not just a pragmatic, sociopolitical movement, organized to achieve specific goals or even the large goal of transforming the institutional environment in which it lived and worked. It had also the aspect of a moral crusade.

> Its members and leaders sometimes thought primarily in moral or religious categories of the struggle of good against evil.[29]

This aspect of a moral crusade was characteristic not only for Poland. The same attitudes have been more or less distinctly present in all democratization movements in the region. One should ask, therefore, what idea of civil action motivated these activities? I argue that this mentality has much in common with the authenticity as presented by Václav Havel. The basis for civil action was conceived as transcendent; it was often grounded on a moral truth, which is supposedly self-evident for everyone. In practical terms it is based on an opposition to clearly mendacious and evil communist state. So it is enough to listen to one's own conscience to be capable of joining civil action. Evil is "substantial" and clearly visible, so there is much reason for people to unite in civil society.

A crusade is not a discussion club. Why should one extensively discuss things that are clear in the first place? It would be false to argue that there are no elements of dialogue and mutual self-understanding in the writings of this period. Havel himself calls for a "living dialogue" within the small civil communities he advocates.[30] But a dialogue is not regarded as something that could call into question the authority of conscience, which is the only link to real humanity. Therefore political activity in civil society has more to do with "values and imperatives" than with a communicative elaboration of horizons. Havel says his antipolitical politics is "practical morality" or "service to the truth."[31] This means that politics is bound to inward authenticity, and all it can do is to apply the inwardly given moral imperatives to concrete political actions. Communication with others is important to politics insofar as it confirms and revitalizes these imperatives.

As mentioned above, there are very few elements of individualism and individual self-realization in the dissident writings of this time. Individualism was often seen as conformism, because individual self-realization in post-totalitarian communist regimes was available only to citizens loyal to the regime. To be authentic in this context doesn't mean to realize oneself in the public life, but to be able to resist inwardly the hypocritical system, which tries to seduce the individual at every turn. That doesn't mean, however, that Central European civil activists and dissidents didn't accept individual self-realization and the pluralism of individual life-projects. Dissident circles, as well as broader democratization movements like "Solidarity" and "Charter 77," often accepted internal pluralism and principled discussion. Nevertheless, this internal pluralism was limited, since it presupposed a consensus on the evil nature of the communist rule and the desirability of its elimination. It was based on a tacit consent to this self-evident truth, which provided a solid basis for the consolidation of civil society. Authenticity became a powerful slogan, because it provided a positive conceptual

contrast to the official hypocrisy of the regime. This contrast, explicitly formulated by dissident intellectuals, promoted the mobilization of civil society on the basis of this moral dichotomy. Moreover, it also served as a basis for moral self-examination and the self-control of individuals. The idea of authenticity provided an important frame of reference for individual actions, by which people could judge their own actions as belonging to the "right" side of the dichotomy.

## 5

The European revolutions of 1989 to 1991 were groundbreaking and, at the same time, unexpected events for many of their participants. They also posed new challenges to those intellectuals who opposed communist regimes with their theoretical activities. Most of their writings were not conceived with the idea of the near breakdown of the communist regime in mind. Václav Havel's idea of living in truth, as well as Adam Michnik's new evolutionism, György Konrad's antipolitics and other dissident conceptions, are actually long-term strategies of resistance—not instructions to civil societies after the reestablishment of liberal democracies. Havel's post-1989 writings and speeches often represent his struggle to accommodate the ideals of authenticity to the situation of postcommunist transition. His views are not very optimistic. As his well-known speech on the "postcommunist nightmare" shows, the ideal is endangered again, this time by the indifference, selfishness, and superficiality of the newly emerging capitalist democracy.[32]

The later political career and intellectual positions of Václav Havel have been described extensively by his biographers.[33] What interests us here is the relationship between the model of political knowledge in the pretransformational civil society, as exemplified by dissident intellectuals and the present-day political culture of the region. The interest in this relationship is important, taking into account the specific nature of Central Eastern European politics today. One important element of the region's politics is the "legitimation from the past": past experiences play a big role in political culture, and they are often used as the last argument in the decision-making. The Communist-era experiences of democratization movements and dissident legacies are increasingly involved in the political process in many countries. The enduring relevance of the legacy of "Solidarity" and its incessant involvement in political games in Poland is the best-known example. However, other countries have also experienced similar tendencies: in Hungary, the right-wing opposition is trying to reenact the Hungarian revolution of 1956. In Latvia, social and political problems have led to demands of continuation of the Singing Revolution of 1989 to 1991 and of the Third

National Awakening, clearly echoing a nostalgia for pretransformational civil activism. The ideals, intuitions, and hopes of this period still play an important role among civil actors, and the ideal of authenticity, elaborated in Havel's writings, may provide a good starting point for the interpretation. The question is, what role is played by the experiences and inherited knowledge models of those oppositional activities play in the consolidation of democracy across the region? What is the legacy of the inwardly oriented, vertical, and primordial authenticity in the region, and to what extent does it contribute to the present-day problems of the region?

I will try to provide some tentative answers to this question. Civil society in the sense of institutionalized, voluntary, and autonomous associations protecting diverse social interests and values, is regarded as weak in the region.[34] People are often disenchanted by the development of democracy, and consider their participation to be pointless. At the same time substantial proportion of citizens in Central and Eastern Europe are inclined to support different kinds of populist causes—especially after the successful EU-enlargement of 2004 and 2007, when politicians feel freer to use monochrome populist sentiments to gain their support.[35] Authenticity may provide a clue to this phenomenon. Largely due to communist-era experiences of purely formal participation, in postcommunist societies everyday political association, institutional rules, votes, and regulations are often perceived as "inauthentic" and mendacious. However, participation is regarded as meaningful and authentic in situations when big divisions between "the good" and "the evil" are available. Populist parties often provide such divisions in different forms: "the people against the elite," "the loyal majority against the disloyal minorities," or "honest citizens against villainous ex-communists." These dichotomies of seemingly homogenous and antagonistic groups provide simple rules for "authentic" civil action, which doesn't require much discussion and reflection. The Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev draws attention to the specific mentality of anticorruption politics in this context. The combating of corruption, initially advanced by Western-supported champions of liberal democracy in the region, was intercepted as a slogan by illiberal populists, who incorporated it into their ideological dualism of "honest people" and "the corrupt elite."[36] This led to an extreme moralization of political discourse, which allowed populist politicians (like the Kaczyński brothers and their allies in Poland, Robert Fico in Slovakia, Rolandas Paksas in Lithuania, and others) to mobilize a significant amount of supporters against the "corrupt system." The weakness of the institutionalized civil society and increased susceptibility to populist causes has clear parallels with the pretransformational mentality, which based civil action on primordial, self-evident dichotomies and on a pregiven authenticity.

Similar parallels may be observed regarding the "conditioned pluralism" of the pretransformational civil society. Tendencies against social pluralism

are observable in many countries of the region. Xenophobic nationalism is on the rise in many countries, most notably in Slovakia, Poland, Romania, and in the Baltic countries. Anti-Semitic sentiments have returned, for example, in Poland, Lithuania, and Romania. Latvia and other countries have experienced a wave of anti-gay mobilization. One cannot say that these sentiments are motivated by a totalitarian denial of social pluralism in general. Rather, they are directed against particular forms of pluralism, against seemingly immoral or disloyal social groups. There is no need for dialogue with these groups, be they gays, ethnic minorities, or ex-communists—just as during the communist period a dialogue with the clearly inhuman communist state was regarded as morally problematic and undesirable. It is not particularly surprising when the same moral vigor and conviction of one's own truthfulness and authenticity that characterized the Velvet and Singing revolutions of 1989 to 1991, now turn against ethnic minorities, as well as against people of different lifestyles and political opinions. Basic liberal principles, such as the division of powers and the rule of law, cannot compete with the sweeping, heartfelt moral ambition of "authentic" populist projects. Hence all independent institutions, like constitutional courts, public media, and public prosecutors, are subjected to political attacks in many countries in the region.

In liberal democratic politics there is very little room for Havelian type of authenticity, which presupposes clear substantial division between good and evil, the infallibility of human conscience, and a transcendent moral absolute. Rather, it involves continuous discussion, formally regulated procedures, morally ambiguous compromises, and different individual life projects and interests, which can be accommodated only with difficulty. It doesn't presuppose a strong basis of absolute, all-uniting authenticity. Liberal democratic civil society as described by Charles Taylor necessarily deals with different projects of authenticity, both individual and collective. This reveals something about the political culture in Central Eastern Europe. Formal democratic institutions function rather well in the region; at the same time they are rather unpopular among citizens. People in the region seem to be significantly less satisfied with their own role and impact in democratic decision-making, than people in Western Europe. This suggests certain disorientation, whereby the low popular support for democratic institutions only mirrors the lack of moral certainty and self-esteem among citizens. Black-and-white ideological slogans, constantly used by populists of different stripes across the region, seem to provide a surrogate of pre-transformational authenticity. Populist solutions, however, don't last for long, since they cannot lastingly reduce all social complexity to their simple dichotomies of good and evil. However, the search continues for authenticity, substantial evil, and pregiven dichotomies. Unstable party systems and constantly shifting party allegiances provide a good example of this search

for authenticity, followed by inevitable disappointments. Latvia is probably the most extreme case; until 2006, a newly founded political party with messianic aspirations won each parliamentary election. But other countries also have similar problems. The point is that moral Manicheism provides great opportunities for creating new political actors. All they need to do is to position themselves as new, morally impeccable messiahs against those evil bastards who ruled the country earlier. Experience and sober evaluation can be only secondary, if the battle between good and evil, as well as authenticity, is at stake.

Alexis de Tocqueville argued in 1840 that in individualized democratic societies local liberties and vibrant civil society "will always be products of art."[37] The correctness of this postulate seems to be proved by the recent developments in Central Eastern Europe. There has been no "natural" passage from a pre-transformational to a liberal and democratic civil society. Models of political knowledge that prevailed during the communist period still exercise significant influence on political participation and civic values in the region. The idea of "authentic" civil action that motivated democratization movements and dissident activities during the communist era may turn out, rather paradoxically, to be destructive in newly established liberal democracies. In order to understand contemporary tendencies of illiberalism in Central Eastern Europe it is not enough to point to the end of the civilizing impact of EU-conditionality during the preaccession period. Nor may references to "negative" experiences of Leninist ideology of the party-state be fully exhaustive. The "positive" experiences of dissident activism and democratization movements can also have obstructive effects on the development of civil mentality, especially when these experiences are constantly involved and invoked in current political games.

## NOTES

1. C. Offe, "Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe," *Social Research* 71, no. 3 (2004): 503. Habermas also speaks ironically of "catching-up" revolution in similar sense. Jürgen Habermas, "Nachholende Revolution und linker Revisionsbedarf," in *Die nachholende Revolution: Kleine Politische Schriften VII* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990).

2. Pelczynski notes that the term "civil society" has originally been chosen by Jacques Rupnik in 1979. Z. A. Pelczynski, "Solidarity and 'The Rebirth of Civil Society' in Poland, 1976–81," in *Civil Society and the State*, ed. J. Keane (London, Verso: 1988), 361. Michnik, who uses it as early as 1981 in his article devoted to the first anniversary of "Solidarność" (A. Michink, "Ein Jahr 'Solidarność,'" in *Polnischer Frieden: Aufsätze zur Konzeption des Widerstands* [Berlin: H. Hirsch, 1985], 55), is commonly referred to as the first, who made it widely popular.

3. J. L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

4. M. Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, ed. Ch. Mouffe (London: Verso, 1992).

5. Pelczyniski, "Solidarity."

6. A. B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992).

7. K. Kumar, "Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefullness of a Historical Term," in *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals* (Minneapolis, London: 2001), 160.

8. See J. F. Pontuso, "Transformation Politics: the Debate between Václav Havel and Václav Klaus on the Free Market and Civil Society," *Studies in Eastern European Thought* 54 (2002): 6.

9. For Havel, the term "post-totalitarian" doesn't mean "postcommunist." It describes a form of society where people are not intimidated by the constant threat of violence, but rather subjected to blind and automatic ideological manipulation (cf. Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Keane [London: Verso, 1985], 27). I follow Havel in this usage.

10. See Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 39ff.

11. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 39, emphasis in the original.

12. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 52.

13. Havel's insistence on the existence of one, unambiguous relation to truth is analyzed also by Veronika Tuckerová's chapter on interpretations of totalitarian language, included in the volume.

14. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 38.

15. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 395.

16. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 93, emphasis in the original.

17. Ch. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14.

18. Ch. Taylor, *The Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

19. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 29

20. Ch. Taylor, "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 267ff.

21. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 90.

22. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 26.

23. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 510.

24. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. G. Lawrence (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988), 506ff.

25. One can find elaborations of this theme in his later writings, as in his speeches during the presidency. See, for example, his speech in the Federal Council June 29, 1990, where he emphasizes the role of the cultural self-development of an individual in the democratic regime (Havel, *Angst vor der Freiheit: Reden des Staatspräsidenten* [Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991], 90–92).

26. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 92.

27. One can also see similar "inwardness" as the determinant of political action also in the writings of the Romanian philosopher and dissident Mihai Şora, analyzed in this volume by Aurelian Crăiuţu.

28. Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 31, emphasis in the original.
29. Pelczynski, "Solidarity," 371–72.
30. See Havel, "Power of the Powerless," 93.
31. See Havel, "Anti-Political Politics," in *Civil Society and the State*, ed. J. Keane (London: Verso, 1988), 397.
32. Havel, "The Post-Communist Nightmare," *New York Review of Books* 40, no. 10 (1993): 8–10.
33. Cf. J. Keane, *Václav Havel: Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 407–506; J. F. Pontuso, *Václav Havel. Civic Responsibility in the Postmodern Age* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 123–70.
34. Cf. M. M. Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).
35. Cf. J. Rupnik, "Popular Front," *The New Republic*, no. 236 (2007): 12–14; Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Leninist Legacies, Pluralist Dilemmas," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 4 (2007): 34–39.
36. I. Krastev, "The New Europe: Respectable Populism and Clockwork Liberalism" (2006), available at www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article.jsp?id=3&debateId=109&articleId=3376# (accessed July 17, 2009).
37. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 674.

# 13

# Mihai Şora: A Philosopher of Dialogue and Hope

*Aurelian Crăiuţu*

> The beginning is to say *Thou* to whomever the course of life brings in front of you.
>
> —Mihai Şora

## THE PHILOSOPHER IN THE CITY

Few concepts of our common vocabulary are as ambiguous and unclear as the term "intellectual" and few subjects are likely to trigger more heated controversies in contemporary Eastern Europe than the role and behavior of public intellectuals. In the eyes of many, the term connotes those individuals who specialize in criticizing rather than affirming something and ably cultivate the image of estranged outsiders, while amply benefiting from their deftly crafted public persona as bourgeois bohemians. This image is strengthened by the fact that intellectuals often appear to be disenchanted with the values of market society and disturbed by the reality of parliamentary politics.

How have public intellectuals navigated the muddy waters of the transition from communism to open society? A cursory look at the existing academic literature shows that, in spite of its importance, this issue, along with the cultural aspects of the transition to liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, has received little attention from political scientists and students of democratization.[1] This is all the more surprising since the revolutions of 1989 radically altered the ways in which public intellectuals related to power and the public sphere. Before 1989, many writers and

philosophers in the former Eastern Bloc did not have to face the competition of the free market and some of them became symbols of courageous and principles resistance to the official communist ideology. After 1989, most writers and philosophers have no longer been insulated from the pressure of market forces. While some of them have continued to act as public intellectuals and remained in the spotlight, others have seen their prestige slipping away as the public became fascinated with the nouveaux riches and the cultural market came to be dominated by pop culture and soft entertainment.

For some philosophers, however, the fall of communism has been a great opportunity to articulate an original political philosophy, something that had not been possible before 1989, when they were denied freedom of expression and movement. This has been the case of the Romanian philosopher Mihai Şora (b. 1916), whose unique intellectual trajectory makes him a fascinating case study for anyone who reflects on the relationship between power, knowledge, and intellectuals in the Eastern European context.[2] Şora's long career combines four distinctive periods: his education in interwar Romania (until 1938), the French decade (1939–1948), the forty-year communist experience (1948–1989), and the postcommunist phase. Few other European intellectuals have had the privilege and chance to witness so many upheavals in their lives and to reflect critically on the difficult apprenticeship of liberty from a genuine philosophical perspective nourished by a rich personal experience. Mihai Şora's writings shed light on the tension between democracy and philosophy and challenge us to rethink the relationship between identity, freedom, and authenticity.

After studying philosophy at the University of Bucharest from 1934 to 1938, where he was one of Mircea Eliade's favorite students, Mihai Şora received a fellowship from the French government in 1939 that allowed him to study in Paris and Grenoble.[3] During the World War II, Mihai Şora was active in the French Resistance under the Vichy Regime and joined the French Communist Party. His first book, *Du dialogue intérieur: Fragments d'une anthropologie métaphysique*, was written in French in the summer of 1944, and appeared at the prestigious Gallimard Publishing House in January 1947, a few years before other prominent Romanian intellectuals (and friends of Şora) in exile such as Eugène Ionesco and E. M. Cioran would become well-known names on the Parisian intellectual scene.[4] Written with verve and exuberance and received with enthusiasm by leading French philosophers such as Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain, Şora's book offered an original synthesis of neo-Thomism, phenomenology, Christian existentialism, personalism, and Marxism.

Mihai Şora's French career came to an abrupt end in 1948 when, during a short trip to Romania, he was prevented from returning back to France.

In communist Romania, Şora never held a teaching appointment and, as a philosopher, he was relegated to a marginal condition, occupying various administrative and editorial positions until his retirement in 1977. In spite of insurmountable challenges, his work as editor was highly successful and rewarding. Şora managed to create a first-rate popular collection, *Biblioteca pentru toţi* (Everyman Library), which published the most representative works from Romanian and world literature and culture. It included classical works such as the speeches of Greek orators and Persian stories, historical masterpieces like Jacob Burckhardt's *The Culture of the Renaissance in Italy*, and literary works from Rousseau's *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (translated by Şora himself) to Proust's masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time*.[5]

Şora's firsthand experience with communism woke him up from the romantic dreams of his rebellious youth in which he was attracted to an ambiguous form of existential Marxism-Leninism. He subsequently refused to write and publish philosophical books as long as they were likely to be censored in Romania. His second volume, *Sarea pământului* (*The Salt of the Earth*) was published in 1978, after a long self-imposed silence, and was followed seven years later by *A fi, a face, a avea* (*To Be, to Do, to Have*) which miraculously appeared during the last years of Ceauşescu's regime. In the 1980s, Mihai Şora's name was on the top of the list of Romanian intellectuals placed under the constant surveillance of the infamous *Securitate*. Although Şora was allowed to travel to the West where his entire family had emigrated in the 1970s, he was denied the right to publish under his own name (in the early 1980s) and was forced to publish under various pseudonyms.[6] Like many other Romanian citizens, Mihai Şora watched dismayed the rapid deterioration of daily life in communist Romania in the 1980s, as the country became increasingly isolated from the outer world. Not surprisingly, he increasingly turned his attention toward political issues which came to the fore of his philosophical reflections in the mid- to late 1980s. In March 1989, Şora courageously joined six other prominent Romanian intellectuals who protested against the harsh treatment applied to the poet Mircea Dinescu, who had openly challenged the Ceauşescu regime and had been placed under tight house surveillance.

After 1989, Mihai Şora briefly served as minister of education in Romania's first postrevolutionary government, a loose coalition of various forces and personalities brought to power by the Revolution of December 1989.[7] Unfortunately, Şora's short (six-month) tenure as member of the government coincided with intense interethnic tensions between the Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Şora emerged as one of the most respected voices of the Romanian civil society and a prominent member of the Bucharest-based Group for Social Dialogue

(founded in the last days of December 1989), and the Civic Alliance (founded in the fall of 1991), which later gave birth to the Party of the Civic Alliance. Many of Şora's essays and interviews from this period appeared in the influential weekly *22* (*Twenty-Two*) edited by the Group for Social Dialogue in Bucharest. It is also important to point out that Mihai Şora was one of the only two members of Romania's first postrevolutionary cabinet (led by Petre Roman) to endorse the Timişoara Proclamation in March 1990. This document, one of the most significant initiatives of the young Romanian civil society, unsuccessfully proposed a lustration law meant to prevent former members of the *Securitate* and leading members of the Communist Party from occupying important political positions in the new democratic context.

In spite of the difficult postrevolutionary political environment in which he operated, Mihai Şora launched a comprehensive and ambitious education reform aiming at correcting some of the major problems created by the previous misallocation of resources and wrong policy priorities. At the heart of his reform was a comprehensive view of education based on a specific view of what it means to be an educated human being in the classical sense of the word.[8] Şora and his team paid special attention to reforming the high-school system and curriculum by promoting a greater role for humanities (philosophy, music, history) and opening up new positions for teachers whose load was reduced. As minister of education, Mihai Şora also campaigned for increasing the autonomy of the existing universities and reforming the legislation to allow for the creation of private colleges and universities in Romania. He consistently promoted social dialogue and tolerance and gave ethnic minorities more opportunities for pursuing education in their mother tongue.

In an important interview from April 1990, in a moment when the relations between power and opposition were extremely tense, Mihai Şora gave a sophisticated philosophical justification of the need for a properly institutionalized contestation of the state by civil society. Pointing to the nefarious consequences of the absence of a proper culture of social dialogue, he reiterated his belief in the importance of transparency, publicity, and legal contestation in the new democratic context. "In the current situation in which Romania finds itself now," Şora argued in April 1990, "there is no other imaginable solution than social dialogue. . . . This dialogue must occur between state and society. Not because the state is an independent entity which could in principle be separated from society, but because the state is nothing else than the emanation of society."[9] Far from being an expression of an untimely political idealism, Şora's plea for reviving the civic spirit and creating a culture of dialogue and cooperation has a deep philosophical grounding that must be traced back to his ontology articulated in *Du dialogue intérieur* and, later, in *Sarea pământului*. In many texts

published between 1990 and 1992, he reiterated, in carefully chosen words, his firm belief in the need for pursuing a politics of the common good taking into account both the short- and the long-term interests of the entire community.

Subsequent political events confirmed the diagnosis offered by Mihai Şora's writings. His own political career came to an abrupt end in mid-June 1990, when he resigned from his ministerial post after protesting against the then government's decision to use the miners from the Jiu-Valley in order to restore order and silence student demonstrators in the capital. A few months later, Şora became a leading figure in the newly formed Civic Alliance and, later, the Party of the Civil Alliance whose political doctrine he helped formulate. In this capacity, Mihai Şora continued to militate for a politics of truth and public good, and endorsed a liberal program which advocated pluralism, decentralization, market economy, privatization, and free enterprise.[10]

Şora's political vision was articulated in two seminal books published in Romanian in the 1990s: *Eu & tu & el & ea . . . sau dialogul generalizat* (*I & Thou & He & She . . . or the Generalized Dialogue*) (1990) and *Firul ierbii* (*The Blade of Grass*) (1999).[11] It is worth pointing out that in *Eu & tu & el & ea . . . sau dialogul generalizat* Şora offered an original defense of key liberal principles and values such as the primacy of civil society, political pluralism, and social dialogue (his book, I must add, has no equivalent in the Romanian political and philosophical tradition). Originally written in 1987–1988, Şora's book manuscript had no chance of being published in communist Romania. Şora made sixty photocopies of the manuscript and circulated them among his closest friends (I was fortunate to be one of those readers in the late 1980s). *Eu & tu & el & ea* was published only in the summer of 1990, and was followed nine years later by *Firul ierbii* an indispensable source for any student of Şora's political philosophy and a testimony to his unique blend of political realism and philosophical idealism. *Firul ierbii* contains not only a number of important theoretical essays on timely issues such as civil society, education, liberalism, and political theology, but also numerous interviews in which Şora commented on politics and formulated the guidelines of a politics of the common good seeking to recreate a vibrant civil society. In 2005, Şora published *Clipa şi timpul* (*Instant and Time*), which completed the remarkable philosophical system that he has been working on for over six decades. *Clipa şi timpul* was issued simultaneously with a very interesting dialogue between Mihai Şora and a younger philosopher, Leonid Dragomir, entitled *Despre toate şi ceva în plus* (*About Everything and Something More*).[12] Not surprisingly, *Clipa şi timpul* ends on a deeply political note which is a testimony to the enduring importance of the political in his philosophical writings.

## ALIENATION, AUTHENTICITY, AND THE REDEMPTIVE ROLE OF THE "INNER DIALOGUE"

Şora's French decade is particularly interesting for at least two reasons. First, it overlapped with two major moments in the history of France: the German occupation of the country and its subsequent liberation; second, it gave the Romanian philosopher the opportunity to become involved in politics and to reflect on the public role and responsibility of the philosopher in the city. Like many French intellectuals of the 1940s, Şora's early political ideas were defined by his allegiance to a particular form of Marxism-Leninism, which combined diverse themes such as alienation and hope with a highly individualistic outlook standing in an uneasy relationship with Marx's and Lenin's teachings. As Şora himself acknowledged in an afterword to the Romanian translation of *Du dialogue intérieur* published in 1995,[13] Marx's early writings appealed to him because they raised the issue of alienation which overlapped to a certain extent with his interest in what he called "ontological salvation." Şora's defined the latter as that state of being in which we manage to bring to fruition all the potentialities with which we are born, when we are authentic in what we do, and are not alienated by society's conventions, values, and norms.[14] Interested in finding a proper balance between *to be* and *to have*, Şora defined politics as "a technique whose function is to preserve being from everything that can obstruct its development, but whose own domain . . . is that of to have."[15] As such, the task of politics is to organize the sphere of "to have" in light of the demands of "to be" and according to the criterion "to each according to his being."[16] Needless to say, this is an unconventional definition of politics because of its strong normative implications, which imply that political criteria for governing society must yield to extra-political considerations on which no universal agreement is likely to be reached.

Şora also sought to justify the need for a certain form of philosophical rebellion against social conformism and existential complacency, which he regarded as two major obstacles to ontological salvation.[17] In his writings, freedom retains an important *inner* dimension which is often neglected by modern political philosophers, who choose instead to define freedom as mere absence of external coercion. While authenticity and ontological salvation are two of the most important themes of *Du dialogue intérieur*, in his first book Mihai Şora also addressed other important related issues such as different types of existential attention and the concepts of "attached detachment" and alienation. The latter looms large in the first appendix to *Du dialogue intérieur*, in which Şora made a fundamental distinction between four derivatives of the verb "to have" (*avoir ontologique, pseudo-ontologique, économique, institutionnel*), all of which are connected to each other as well as to the issue of authenticity.[18] The last two forms of "to have" are consti-

tuted by the social, political, and economic institutions that facilitate social interaction. *L'avoir ontologique* must be understood as the outcome of one's choices that are in harmony with one's being and potential. The second form of the verb "to have"—*l'avoir pseudo-ontologique*—is a crystallization of one's past actions which are then artificially transformed into a set of habits and inclinations, thus posing significant obstacles to the free and harmonious development of one's personality. As such, in Şora's opinion, *l'avoir pseudo-ontologique* is one of the many forms in which the realm of appearances and inauthenticity seeks to replace that of being and authenticity.[19]

This explains why according to Şora, one must always remain existentially attentive and vigilant in order to be authentic. The routine of daily life tends to make us prisoners of our own instincts and habits, while the institutions that we have created in order to meet our needs tend to become rigid and ineffective and transform us into their servants. Our condition, Şora argued, is similar to that of a swimmer who must always be attentive in order to overcome gravity and avoid drowning. We always face many existential choices that are not of equal weight or value. Only a few of our choices can fulfill our potential by allowing us to find what Şora calls "the royal way of being." In his view, the tragedy of human beings is to spend the greatest part of their lives wandering along the enticing paths of appearances and seeking spiritual nourishment mostly from the deceiving images and ideas they encounter daily.[20] It is the task of the inner dialogue to keep us awake and vigilant in our existential choices, so that we can remain authentic in what we do and who we are. As such, *le dialogue intérieur* is the expression of our freedom, since our identity is never fixed once and for all, but represents the unpredictable outcome of our free choices.

All these existential themes are at the heart of Şora's original political philosophy as articulated in his later volumes. Unlike *Du dialogue intérieur*, these books were written in the form of a free dialogue between three characters, a "more knowledgeable" person ("*Mai Ştiutor*"), a "young friend" ("*Tânărul Prieten*"), and a "devoted companion" ("*Devotatul Amic*"). At the heart of Şora's political philosophy lies his belief that each human being has a threefold mission which everyone must seek to fulfill as best as possible. First of all, each person must strive to bring into reality all of his own virtual potentialities, in a manner similar to a tree that accomplishes this task spontaneously and naturally. Not surprisingly, "how to live like a tree without ceasing to be a human being" is one of Şora's seminal questions and the epigraph of *Du dialogue intérieur*.[21] Secondly, each individual ought to help and encourage his fellow citizens to be authentic and create the minimal conditions for fulfilling their potential. Consequently, each person should join forces with others in order to build together, step by step, a genuine political community, in which "to be" is duly honored and placed above "to have."[22]

These claims articulated in Şora's early work are pregnant with significant normative implications for topics as diverse as the relationship between instrumental and final values, individual and collective identity, and the contrast between community and society. At the same time, Şora's later writings offer a vigorous defense of the principles of open society and representative government, including political pluralism, free competition for power, separation of powers, publicity, civil society, freedom of thought and association. If Şora declares himself a liberal in the European sense of the word, his liberalism is not a minimalist one, because it does not avoid questions about the human good and the good life in general. What makes his political philosophy unconventional compared to contemporary political theorists arguing about "decent society" is the fact that it rests on an original ontological model of the zero-radius sphere originally presented in *The Salt of the Earth* and reformulated in *To Be, to Do, to Have*. This model draws on the Aristotelian dichotomy between act and potentiality to explain the mystery of being with the aid of a *coincidentia oppositorium* logic inspired from the writings of Nicholas of Cusa. Here lies, in fact, one of the major differences between Şora's approach and the outlook of another leading Romanian philosopher, Constantin Noica (1909–1987). If the latter, in the footsteps of Hegel, believed that philosophy does not deal with everything that exists, but only with what "really is," for Şora, everything that exists is precious insofar as it reveals a deeper essence which is present here and now. Furthermore, it is this foundational element that distinguishes Şora's phenomenological approach from the method of contemporary Anglo-American political philosophers who, with few exceptions, are reluctant to use ontological (or theological) arguments in their political theories.[23]

In this regard, Şora's philosophy has a distinctively Central European tone which reminds one of Václav Havel's preference for a politics of authenticity, which seeks to restore human dignity and moral integrity by giving individuals a chance to regain a sense of transcendence in an increasingly secular and disenchanted world.[24] For both Şora and Havel, to be authentic involves carefully listening to one's inner voice which is, to paraphrase St. Augustine, deeper than one's deepest self. Both thinkers believe that this kind of personal authenticity could (and should) serve as a basis for civil action in modern pluralist democracies, where people are guided by and act upon different values and principles. By deriving political and ethical (normative) conclusions from his ontological model of the zero-radius sphere, Şora's writings shed fresh light on the relationship between freedom and final values. By affirming the existence of a strong link between inner liberty and political liberty, he argues that there is an important and overlooked correspondence between the generalized (social) dialogue and the inner dialogue that takes place within each individual. Equally important, by stressing the continuity between extra-political (ontological, metaphysi-

cal) questions and political issues, Şora's theory of dialogical community challenges us to rethink the proper relationship between instrumental and final values. While emphasizing the importance of political values, Şora also insists that politics can never be a final value and that its main task is to create only the minimal conditions for an adequate social interaction between free and equal individuals. Nevertheless, if politics is confined to the domain of instrumental values, this must not be interpreted in a narrow sense, since in Şora's view, politics cannot—and should not—be indifferent toward supreme values. One such supreme value is the "generalized dialogue" which, in his view, is essential to rebuilding the social bonds that had been destroyed by many decades of communism.

## DIALOGICAL DEMOCRACY

The central place occupied by the notion of "generalized dialogue" in Mihai Şora's conceptual framework must be duly underscored here, for this concept is at the heart of his vision of the good society and underlies his philosophy of dialogue. It is not a mere coincidence that the latter has many affinities with the dialogical ideas of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas.[25] It will be recalled that at the core of Buber's theory lay a seminal distinction between *I-Thou* (*Ich-Du*) and *I-It* (*Ich-Es*) relations, which accounts for the two different ways in which people relate to each other in the world.[26] According to Buber, *I-Thou* is the primary word of relation, meeting, and dialogue between free individuals who discover each other as their "Thou" in their daily exchanges. For both Buber and Lévinas, being oneself in the full sense of the word amounts to *being for the other* and addressing the other as *other*, rather than a mere replica of one's own self. In the world of *I-It*, the relations between individuals tend to be neutral, impersonal, and utilitarian, without any attention being paid to the uniqueness of each human being. In such an impersonal world, the individual is never a real presence, but is regarded as a mere number among other faceless numbers.

What Şora shares with Lévinas and Buber is the belief that the self must be conceived of not as substance, but as a living relationship that exists only insofar an "I" meets and addresses a "Thou." Such a dialogical perspective goes beyond the Cartesian-Husserlian conception of philosophy as egology as well as beyond Husserl's famous theory of intersubjectivity articulated in *Cartesian Meditations*, which originated in a series of lectures given in Paris in 1929 and translated into French by Lévinas himself. In these lectures, Husserl sought to reconstitute the external world by relying on an interpretation of the individual conscience (*Bewusstsein*), which after putting the validity of the world in parenthesis through an operation called *epoché*, proceeds to "constitute" the external objects anew through its own

intentional acts.[27] Husserl's conception of the transcendental self amounts to arguing that, for the objectifying ego that "constitutes" the world though its own *cogitata*, nothing can be external in the proper sense of the word. As Lévinas himself pointed out, "the consciousness where finally the existence of those movements is acted . . . is in the origin of all that comes from the exteriority."[28]

This abstract philosophical position has important practical and political consequences that point to a fundamental divergence between two widely different conceptions of intersubjectivity: monadological and dialogical. In the fifth Cartesian meditation, which constitutes the crux of his phenomenological investigations, Husserl took the first route, which explains why his transcendental ego can never truly discover or reach the other *as other* and remains confined to its own monad.[29] In the footsteps of Buber and Lévinas, Șora argues that the decisive event occurs when an "I" meets and says "Thou" to the other. This dialogical relationship is the fundamental fact of human existence. The upshot of this view is that neither the individual nor the community as such can be considered as the primary units of social relations, and that the fundamental element is the *meeting* between two free human beings who discover each other as their *alter ego* in very act of their dialogical encounter. "The beginning," Șora writes, "is to say *thou* to whomever the course of life brings in front of you. Everything follows from here."[30] It is also worth underscoring the implications of this view for rethinking the nature of the public sphere, a theme that lies at the core of Șora's political philosophy. The "I" that meets and speaks to a "Thou" does not regard the latter as an object constituted by its own intentional acts. On the contrary, the meeting between an "I" and a "Thou" allows the other to freely manifest and realize his or her own otherness and difference. As such, the *I-Thou* relationship belongs to a qualitatively different level than the gravitational field of the *I-It*, in which the external subjects remain mere projections of the self-centered "I." Thus, a genuinely intersubjective world eventually arises in which the "I" does not represent or constitute the "Thou" as his or her own image, but meets the other in a living relationship based on a genuine appeal. This is a world in which individuals take responsibility for their alter egos and respect their equality, freedom, and difference. Last but not least, it is their reciprocal opening to each other that reconstitutes the social sphere each time that an "I" meets a "Thou" in a living relationship and open dialogue. Thus, the "public" sphere (between individuals) is redefined and kept alive by each genuine dialogue and encounter between an "I" and a "Thou."

The recurrence of this theme in Șora's philosophy is far from being accidental. It stems not only from his longstanding interest in the dialogical philosophy of Buber and Lévinas, but also from Șora firsthand experience of daily life under communism, when interpersonal social relations were

characterized by suspicion and distrust and private life was reduced to meeting and dealing only with carefully chosen, trustworthy friends. Any individual, Şora argues, becomes a real presence only when he or she steps into a living relationship with other fellow citizens, who thus emerge as equal dialogical partners. It is the meeting between an "I" and a "Thou" multiplied at the social level that makes possible the social sphere and the generalized dialogue. In Şora's view, being with others amounts to opening oneself, recognizing, and addressing the others as unique human beings. No social space is worthy of being called a genuinely human community in the absence of this dialogical intersubjectivity. In order to realize one's full potential, Şora claims, one must live in a dialogical community of free and equal individuals who act responsibly toward their fellow citizens and create for them the opportunities to participate in a generalized social dialogue.

Worth noting here is the strong emphasis on the difference between community and society, an old distinction whose roots can be traced back to the German sociological tradition beginning with Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. By stressing the importance of creating and sustaining a generalized dialogue among free individuals, Mihai Şora defines community as "the free communion of concrete persons, with all their baggage of individual traits."[31] On this view, genuine communities are not collective super-entities seeking to obliterate the identity of their members or to reduce them to a (rigidly defined) common denominator. In Şora's view, a true communitarian life is predicated upon—and inseparable from—diversity and pluralism. To stress this point, Şora makes a seminal distinction between two types of "we." The first one is an open and inclusive "we" (*noi-cel-deschis*), characterized by generosity, pluralism, diversity, openness, and tolerance; the second "we" (*noi-cel-închis*) has a rigid identity based on exclusion, collective egoism, intolerance, and uniformity.[32] Şora unambiguously rejects the latter and insists that pluralism and diversity are essential to rebuilding the social bonds between individuals which had been destroyed under communism.

Equally important, Şora's political writings contain valuable reflections on the importance of self-government and decentralization meant to promote a vigorous local life based on the principle of subsidiarity.[33] A healthy democracy, claims Şora, is one that respects local traditions and promotes self-government; according to this view, true democracy is built from the bottom up, not vice versa. Şora believes in the value of small and informal communities based on face-to-face relationships that allow people to learn and practice the art of self-government. These open, flexible, and dynamic structures ought to rise naturally from below and can never be the outcome of concerted state action (the state can often hinder their development). In the footsteps of Tocqueville, Şora argues that one must always start from

the local level and that "the true school of government of a country begins with its local administration."[34] In Şora's view, administrative decentralization is needed not only to unleash individuals' entrepreneurial initiatives and resources, but also serves as a means of fostering the revival of the civic spirit which the fledgling Eastern European democracies need for their long-term survival.

Şora's passionate defense of dialogical communities also serves another important purpose. For him, the rebirth of a genuine dialogical-communitarian spirit might be a means of rehumanizing and reenchanting a world which has become atomized and impersonal to the point that many individuals live monadic and disconnected lives without experiencing any sense of genuine sense of solidarity with their fellow citizens. Şora is concerned about the pernicious effects of extreme individualism that leads to social atomization and civic apathy. His response to this modern predicament is articulated in clear and sober terms that avoid a romantic (but no less pernicious) form of nostalgia for bygone (and sometimes unduly idealized) ages as well as an infatuation with modern progress. Şora contends that we must create the minimal conditions for an adequate social coexistence on the *horizontal* level, but he also insists at the same time that we must strive to create a society suitable to our spiritual and cultural needs in keeping with the *vertical* dimension of human life which must never be neglected. Although Şora defends freedom of enterprise, which he regards as essential to the economic recovery of all Eastern European societies, he is careful to stress that the market society is *not* the final answer to their deepest problems and challenges.[35] While the mechanisms of the market and the institutions of democracy do play a fundamental role in protecting liberty, they cannot create the cultural and spiritual reserves and resources they need to function properly. These resources come from beyond the market and are never produced by it. Much like the indispensable and often unquantifiable things in life, the highest interests of the community have no quantifiable exchange value and are likely to be neglected if supply and demand are allowed to entirely dominate social relations.[36] The free market tends to favor activities that are a source of material gain and does not always take into consideration reasons and interests which are not a direct source of profit.

In turn, Şora points out, reiterating a point that had been brilliantly made by Tocqueville two centuries ago, democracy fosters a certain form of conformism, as conditions become more equal and alike.[37] Not only democratic citizens give themselves over to philosophical meditation with increasing difficulty, but they tend to have little esteem for it, since a pragmatic mindset is rarely suited to philosophical ruminations.[38] In all of his writings, Şora reminds us that we need to preserve the "the salt of earth" and must constantly fight against anything that promotes uniformity and vulgar materialism. By refusing to relate to our fellow citizens in purely

instrumental and utilitarian terms and by seeking to acknowledge and respect their uniqueness in our daily exchanges, we can preserve a genuine plurality and diversity in a world that tends toward greater conformism and homogeneity.

As such, Şora's philosophy of authenticity and dialogue has a strong normative element which is inseparable from his views on the good society and human flourishing centered around the affirmation of the uniqueness and dignity of each human being. As already noted, he believes that maintaining alive a strong dialogical communitarian life is essential to the preservation of a vibrant civil society.[39] I should add that Şora's understanding of communitarian life goes well beyond the utilitarian views of contemporary proponents of communitarianism, many of whom only offer minor modifications of the deontological arguments put forward by their liberal colleagues.[40] Şora's perfectionist form of liberalism is predicated upon the assumption that, in order to be effective, the institutions of liberal democracy and market economy must be complemented by a certain set of extra-political and extra-economical resources which will always be in short supply and must be properly cultivated.[41] In his view, it matters a lot if liberal principles and institutions are grounded in a healthy or unhealthy social and cultural background; similarly, the ideal of liberty undergirding these principles and institutions has significant practical implications.

To summarize, Şora's political ideal is that of a world that has solid foundation; protects local freedoms, diversity, and pluralism; and successfully resists the tendency toward standardization and uniformity. This is a world rooted in a healthy public morality that fosters personal responsibility and individual initiatives and also places priority on the long-term interests over short-term ones.[42] Finally, in Şora's ideal world the forces of the market and political democracy are given their due, while people are constantly reminded that the most important things in life are always *beyond* supply and demand, as the German economist Wilhelm Röpke once wrote. It is no mere coincidence that Şora's political philosophy shares important affinities with Röpke's outlook at the core of which lies the idea that "man can wholly fulfill his nature only by freely becoming part of a community and having a sense of solidarity with it."[43]

## CAN INTELLECTUALS REENCHANT THE MODERN WORLD?

Much like two centuries ago when Tocqueville was writing *Democracy in America*, today, Eastern European democracies are driven today by a powerful force which we can only hope to moderate, but not to reverse or defeat. This force poses a number of significant threats to freedom: the excessive interest in the private sphere at the expense of the public sphere and the com-

mon good, narrow individualism, and social isolation. New social bonds are slow to emerge while civic apathy threatens to become widespread. Hence, the task of those who are called to govern modern society and the mission of philosophers is, to quote again Tocqueville, "to *instruct* democracy, if possible to reanimate its beliefs, to *purify* its mores, to *regulate* its movements, to substitute little by little the science of affairs for its inexperience, and knowledge of its true interests for its blind instincts; to adapt its government to time and place; to modify it according to circumstances and men."[44] Since the natural instincts of democracy are "to subordinate the individual to the state and to crush the former under the weight of the masses,"[45] the mission of philosophers and public intellectuals is to act as "trimmers." They must join in exerting the strongest possible pressure in the opposite direction to the dominating one in order to keep the ship of the state on an even keel.[46] This is particularly important since democracy tends to shrink people's mental horizon by making them restless prisoners of the present. In a democratic society, nothing is fixed and everyone is constantly tormented by the fear of falling and consumed by the ambition to rise. Driven by the desire to improve their well-being and having the opportunity to do so, democratic citizens have many passions and goals, but most of them end in the love of wealth and the desire for comfort. As such democratic institutions and principles, if not properly moderated by "aristocratic" elements, tend to diminish individual ambitions and surreptitiously place a tacit ban on seriously considering any political and cultural alternatives.

Because of its many imperfections, to love democracy well is no easy task. It demands not only passion, but also moderation and prudence, two virtues that, alas, many philosophers and public intellectuals lack. As Raymond Aron once argued, modern society must be analyzed and appreciated for what it is worth, without unjustified enthusiasm or utter indignation.[47] How do Eastern European public intellectuals view their role in this context? If we listen to two of their leading representatives, G. M. Tamás and Slavoj Žižek, Eastern European philosophers have few reasons to fall in love with the nuances of the gray of democracy, as their countries are completing the transition back to capitalism.[48] The latter, in Tamás's opinion, tends to silence through indifference, mockery, or marginalization all anticapitalist or antidemocratic theories and ideas while also fostering an increasing commercialization of the world. The life of the mind in the emerging democracies is thus forced to adjust to the logic of the market that seeks to extend its pragmatic standards and profit-driven criteria to all spheres of life.

Tamás and Žižek find this utilitarian state of affairs deeply troubling because, in their view, it tends to discredit any form of intellectual radicalism or romanticism, and makes us incapable of thinking beyond the current

liberal-capitalist horizon. They also fear that the triumph of democracy and the market might exercise a subtle and pernicious form of censorship, a new *Denkverbot* with long-lasting effects on the quality of intellectual and cultural life in the new democracies. In their view, it is necessary that philosophers continue to exercise their utopian and critical function by constantly challenging the dominant social constellation of values and principles. The underlying assumption is that, on the one hand, philosophy flourishes in a world in which political regimes compete for supremacy and, on the other hand, it stagnates in a world dominated by one such regime to the exclusion of all others. If before 1989, the image of liberal capitalism represented such a credible and welcome alternative, after 1989 its absolute triumph has stifled the competition with its rivals and triggered a profound transformation in the role and status of philosophy.

Needless to say, one can argue that Tamás and Žižek are overly pessimistic because their assessments ignore the flourishing of intellectual life in post-1989 Eastern Europe and conflate democracy, the market, and capitalism. In this respect, I find Mihai Şora's middling position much more convincing and helpful in rethinking the relationship between intellectuals, knowledge, power, and the market. He has successfully played the role of an Aronian committed observer in dark times and represents, in the Romanian context, the philosopher who espouses responsibility and moderation and believes, with Adam Michnik, that gray, too, can be beautiful if one knows how to work with it.[49] Like Aron, Camus, Havel, Patočka, and Michnik, Şora sees the philosopher and public intellectual as playing a key role in the attempt to disintoxicate minds and combat any form of dogmatism. For Şora, the philosopher who reflects responsibly on the affairs of the polis must seek to discern the final values and properly relate them to the instrumental ones. In so doing, the political philosopher searches for the best means of ensuring a harmonious coexistence between unique and diverse individuals in a free society that respects their freedom and rights. "In the city," Şora writes, "the philosopher is entrusted with the task of bringing to light the deep causes of political affairs, distinguishing the goals and ranking the means, finding the true final values and imagining instrumental values suited to and compatible with the final ones. The task of the philosopher is not to lose sight of the ideal on the winding, up and down, road toward it."[50] Hence, in Şora's view, the political philosopher and public intellectual are called to cultivate in others the willingness to search for the rules, principles, and institutions that foster social dialogue, publicity, and freedom.

But can philosophers and public intellectuals be effective in their attempt to moderate democracy by purifying its instincts and educating its beliefs? In Şora's opinion, philosophers and public intellectuals can (and must) contribute to reenchanting the modern world by reminding their fellow citizens that social life never goes on in a moral vacuum and needs the

support of cultural and spiritual forces and principles *beyond* the market. As such, the values and principles of democracy ought to be regarded and endorsed as part of a wider order encompassing ethics, laws, and the natural conditions of life and happiness. Şora joins those who argue that human beings do not live only by the goods they possess, but also by beauty, poetry, grace, love, friendship, and openness toward transcendence. This is the world of dialogical communities allowing people to enjoy the diversity of social life and achieve their human potential in freedom. In this regard, Şora follows in the footsteps of Jacques Maritain, one of his preferred authors, who argued in *Integral Humanism* that "the human person as a member of society is a *part* of the latter as of a whole that is greater, but *not by reason of himself as a whole*. . . . The core of his life as a person draws him beyond the temporal city, of which this life has nevertheless need."[51] Both Maritain and Şora believe that "what is most profound in the person, his eternal vocation, together with the goods linked with this vocation, is superior to this common work and gives direction to it."[52]

What Mihai Şora's readers will not find in his writings is a denunciation of our age and civilization as decadent. To his credit, he has never succumbed to the temptation of speaking like a conservative prophet of the past and has always affirmed that social renewal and political reform in the temporal city always have a twofold dimension, an internal as well as an external one. As such, they can always be carried out everywhere, in a spirit of humility and respect for the transcendent values that guide and define our lives.[53]

## DO WE NEED PHILOSOPHERS IN DEMOCRATIC TIMES?

It would not be inaccurate to think of Mihai Şora and Constantin Noica as the two main poles of contemporary Romanian philosophical culture. Through their writings, young Romanians have been offered a living contact with two genuine cultural models proposing two fundamentally different attitudes toward the political sphere. It is worth pointing out that Şora, who otherwise had a very close intellectual relationship with Noica for nearly five decades, never fully endorsed the latter's model of salvation through culture that sought to transcend the limitations of history by focusing on the private rather than the public sphere. In a recent interview, Şora argued that "the public sphere must have never been overlooked. Any project for the future should have aimed precisely at an adequate reconstruction of this space. The intense self-educating strategy adopted by few highly cultivated individuals who shied away from the public sphere . . . inevitably created a certain moral and intellectual detachment vis-à-vis the horrible and sys-

tematic homogeneization enforced by the regime in the public sphere. . . . But very few people could benefit in practice from this [elitist] strategy."[59] In *Despre toate şi ceva în plus* (2005), referring to the differences between his and Noica's cultural and educational visions, Şora explained that "the question was . . . how to use the then existing circumstances not only in order to create high culture, but also in order to bring to culture and to self-discovery your fellow citizens whom you do not know personally, by helping them find their own identity."[60]

Noica always retained a special admiration for a Platonic elitist model searching for a natural aristocracy formed by the "pure people, those who are generally acknowledged to be untainted" and are "recognized by everyone as deserving."[61] As philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, Noica's main disciple, once remarked, "Noica believed only in the Last Judgment of culture, and in the credentials with which one might present oneself before it. He was only interested in 'racehorses,' not in the 'circus horses' who could evolve in the arena of history."[62] As such, Noica's philosophical heroism in dark times ultimately turned its back to history and the public realm and refused to offer a viable political alternative to the once dominant Communist orthodoxy. Noica believed that the philosopher's quest for truth must not be troubled or distracted by the vicissitudes of history and politics. Philosophy, he once famously claimed, is not interested in suffering: "The most philosophy can do is to record suffering when it occurs and then call the man of religion or the politician to do something about it. . . . Philosophy does not deal with everything that exists, but only with what really is. . . . Philosophy claims the right to offend the world and to say, 'It doesn't interest me.'"[63] Needless to say, this apolitical position significantly differs from Şora's philosophical and political outlook that I have outlined in this essay.

Some of Şora's political ideas might seem utopian or could be interpreted as mere romantic musings of a philosopher advancing strong normative views grounded in an allegedly idealistic understanding of civil and social life. Their perfectionist tone might clash with the more modest aspirations of those who want little else than peaceful social coexistence in order to pursue their own interests in their private lives. Proponents of such a minimalist understanding of liberalism might wonder how are we to build a society whose members are integrated not only on the horizontal level (as free and equal citizens), but also vertically, by dint of their inward relation to the sacred trinity formed by the Good, the Truth, and the Beautiful. On this view, it remains an open question how—and if—the demands of a communitarian-dialogical philosophy à la Şora could be reconciled with a minimalist and purely liberal policy whose aim is to ensure that individual rights are not jeopardized by claims made on behalf of the "common good." Şora's more skeptical readers might wonder if he is ultimately right to argue that the transition from community to society amounts to

one from "to be" to "to have,"[54] and they might be skeptical toward any attempt to awaken in each human being the "person" dormant beneath the existential surface.[55] Much like society in general, communities of various kinds can exert various conformist pressures that might make Şora's idea of "detached attachment" and his politics of hope rather difficult to espouse in the modern world.

Nevertheless, we should remember that Şora does *not* intend to propose a new political utopia and that his testimony is not that of a philosopher isolated in an ivory tower, far from the sound and fury of the outer world. Şora's message is that of a man who has witnessed the greatest social and political experiments of the twentieth century, survived them with grace and dignity, and had the opportunity to critically reflect on them with the benefit of hindsight.[56] Şora affirms that intellectuals forfeit their mission if they shy away from the urgent demands of the societies in which they live. He strongly believes that philosophers must not seek to create educational colonies for the select few; instead, they should work to reform the public sphere and must strive to raise the intellectual level of their communities. Through their own moderation and balanced judgment, Şora argues, philosophers and public intellectuals must contribute to the civic education of their fellow citizens and are also expected to speak out against injustice in unambiguous terms when need be. In doing so, however, they ought to resist the temptation of becoming ideologues in the exclusive service of a particular doctrine or regime. The supreme virtues in politics, opines Şora, are responsibility, moderation, and discernment (or a good sense of proportions). Not surprisingly, the rejection of political utopias and collective fantasies of salvation[57] is a constant theme of all of Şora's writings, along with the affirmation of *hope*, reminiscent of the apology of hope (as a cardinal virtue) made by Charles Péguy, another favorite author of the Romanian philosopher.[58]

In our world of economists, calculators, and sophists as well as professionalized intellectuals (academics), we must honor and pay special attention to independent and unconventional thinkers like Mihai Şora who, while strongly endorsing the principles of liberal democracy and representative government, also remind us that we should constantly strive to rehumanize our world by resisting those forces which threaten to destroy the beauty of life and the "salt of the earth." Şora's firm defense of the principles and institutions of liberal democracy is grounded in his belief that the only reasonable political goal is to try to achieve a form of "convergent anarchy"[64] and relative justice allowing people to live decently and freely. Şora's philosophical outlook rests on a healthy and flexible "detached attachment" which, in spite of its visceral opposition to any form of intellectual "fast food" so common today, never treats the contemporary world, in any of its manifestations, with cold distance or prideful contempt. His

writings articulate an original view on the relationship between power, knowledge, and intellectuals and invite us to reflect on the meta-political framework of liberal democracy. In this regard, Şora resembles the classical political philosopher who searches for the good beyond the realm of politics, that is, outside of Plato's cave. If he recommends political engagement, he does not do it because he sees political action as the supreme good, but because he considers it as an inevitable necessity and duty. As such, Şora's philosophical writings offer us valuable suggestions for moderating and educating democracy, and teach us how we can remain human in a fast-changing, agitated, and often superficial world.

## NOTES

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1. Andrew Wachtel, "Writers and Society in Eastern Europe, 1989–2000: The End of the Golden Age," *East European Politics and Societies* 17, no. 4 (2003): 583–621.

2. For an interpretation of Şora's political philosophy, see Aurelian Crăiuţu, "De la dialogul interior la dialogul generalizat: Note despre filosofia politică a lui Mihai Şora," in *Dialog si libertate: Eseuri în onoarea lui Mihai* Şora [Dialogue and Liberty: Essays in Honor of Mihai Şora], ed. Sorin Antohi and Aurelian Crăiuţu (Bucharest: Nemira, 1997), 101–19. For an analysis of Şora's writings in the context of Romanian philosophy, see Virgil Nemoianu, "Mihai Şora and the Traditions of Romanian Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 43, no. 1 (1990): 591–605; also Thomas Pavel, "Le Sel de la terre," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 4 (October–December 1980): 539–42. A collection of essays on Mihai Şora as philosopher, editor, and writer can be found in *Dialog si libertate* and in the anthology edited by Marius Ghica, *Şora* (Piteşti: Paralela 45, 2006).

3. In his *Autobiography*, Eliade fondly remembered his former students, Mihai and Mariana Şora, whom he also had the chance to meet again in postwar Paris in 1945 to 1946. An exceptional account of Şora's French period can be found in Mariana Şora, *O viaţă în bucăţi* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1992).

4. A Romanian translation of this book (with an original postscript) was published in 1995. For more information, see Şora, *Despre dialogul interior*, trans.

Mona and Sorin Antohi (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995). Cioran's first book, *Précis de décomposition* came out in 1949 at Gallimard, while Ionesco's first play, "The Bald Soprano," was staged in Paris a few years later.

5. For more information about Şora's work as editor, see Tiberiu Avramescu, "Editorul," in Antohi and Crăiuţu, *Dialog si libertate*, 45–58, and Mihai Şora, *Filosoficale: Filosofia ca viaţă* [Philosophical Miscellanea: Philosophy as Life] (Bucharest: Elion, 2000), 147–48. It is worth pointing out that as editor, Şora proposed a plan that included over 2,000 new titles. The initial intention was to publish a new title every week at an extremely affordable price: 5 lei (the average monthly salary then was 1,500–2,000 lei). In 1969, the best year of the collection *Biblioteca pentru toţi*, 94 volumes were published (the print run was 8,963,000 issues).

6. Most of these texts were originally published in the Bucharest-based journal *Viaţa românească* and collected later in *Filosoficale* (2000).

7. For more information about Şora's philosophy of education, see Sorin Antohi and Mihai Şora, *Mai avem un viitor? România la început de mileniu* [Do We Still Have a Future? Romania at the Beginning of the Milennium] (Iaşi, Romania: Polirom, 2001), 47–55.

8. See Mihai Şora, *Firul ierbii* [The Blade of Grass] (Craiova, Romania: Scrisul Românesc, 1999), 289; also see 170–74.

9. Şora, "Singura cale dialogul," in *Firul ierbii*, 164–65.

10. Upon submitting his resignation, Mihai Şora published an important essay in the Bucharest-based weekly *22*, entitled "A Few Questions" (republished in *Firul ierbii*, 177–78). With the benefit of hindsight, Şora reflected on his achievements and shortcomings as minister of education in a substantive interview with Doina Sterescu-Sântimbreanu from December 1992 (republished in *Firul ierbii*, 280–89). On Şora's membership in the Civic Alliance and the Party of Civic Alliance, see Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 188–204; Antohi and Şora, *Mai avem un viitor?* 32–34, 58. Not surprisingly, one of Şora's best political essays published in November 1990 was entitled "Ne va salva doar adevărul" [Only Truth Will Save Us] (published in *Firul ierbii*, 188–91).

11. Of the theoretical texts collected in *Firul ierbii*, the most important ones are: "We, You, They—Criteria for Living Together" (55–60), "The Theology of Politics" (259–68), "A Few Elements of Political Doctrine for Romania Today" (310–27), "The Root of the Grass" (434–54), and "The Philosopher in the City" (464–79).

12. Mihai Şora, *Clipa şi timpul* (Piteşti, Romania: Paralela 45, 2005). For a review essay of Şora's most recent two books (published in 2005), see Aurelian Crăiuţu, "Devino ceea ce eşti!" *22*, 809 (September 2005): 16–17, republished in a revised form in Ghica, *Şora*, 190–95.

13. Şora, "Cuvânt după jumătate de secol," in *Despre dialogul interior*, 205.

14. Here is Şora's exact definition of ontological salvation: "Être de la meilleure manière qu'il peut, ce qu'il est déjà obscurement" (Mihai Şora, *Du dialogue intérieur ou fragments d'une anthropologie métaphysique* [Paris: Gallimard, 1947], 31). He also writes: "Notre problème immédiat et notre seul 'problème' véritable est celui du 'salut ontolgique.' Car, ce salut, nous sommes à même de le réaliser sans aucune aide extérieure, et nous le réalisons même avec chaque approfondissement de notre existence, avec chaque rapprochement des racines de notre vie, avec chaque appro-

priation de nous par nous-mêmes. . . . Tout plongeon réussi vers les sources de notre être nous fait realiser l'état de 'salut ontologique'" (*Du dialogue intérieur*, 47).

15. Şora, *Du dialogue intérieur*, 161.

16. Şora, *Du dialogue intérieur*, 163. To use Şora's own words: "*Organiser l'avoir en ayant les yeux fixés sans interruption sur l'être*" (161).

17. It is worth pointing out here the affinity of Şora's ideas with Camus' endorsement of a spirit of rebellion toward social conventions and institutions. Şora was also influenced by the philosophical movement of personalism that flourished in the 1930s and 1940s in France, mostly around Emmanuel Mounier and the journal *Esprit*. On Camus, see Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Camus, Arendt, and the Spirit of Modern Rebellion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992).

18. See Şora, *Du dialogue intérieur*, 141–87. This theme also appears in *A fi, a face, a avea* [To Be, to Do, to Have] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1985) and is the subject of the opening chapter of *Eu & tu & el & ea . . . sau dialogul generalizat* [I & Thou & He & She . . . or the Generalized Dialogue] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1990).

19. Şora, *Du dialogue intérieur*, 150.

20. Man's tragedy, writes Şora, "*c'est de passer la plus grande partie de sa vie à errer sur les voies innombrables et embrouillées du paraître . . . et à ne pouvoir se repaître que des mirages décevants du paraître qui s'y trouve*" (Şora, *Du dialogue intérieur*, 43). On authenticity, it would be interesting to compare Şora's ideas with those of Czech philosopher Jan Patočka (1907–1977). See, for example, Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 98–102.

21. In this respect, is worth pointing out the similarity between Şora's position and the ideas of the French Catholic writer and philosopher, Gustave Thibon (1903–2001), who was also the editor of Simone Weil's *Gravity and Grace*. He wrote about the need for roots in terms that reminds one of Şora's "detached attachment." Here is a revealing passage from Thibon: "*Enracinement.*—Les plantes sont rivées à un coin du sol. *Problème: comment sauver l'enracinement sans verser dans l'étroitesse et le fanatisme?* L'arbre reçoit sa sève du coin de terre où il prend racine. Imiter jusqu'au bout l'arbre qui se nourrit à la fois d'humus et de lumière. *Synthèse du particulier dans ce qu'il a de plus borné et de l'universel ignorant les limites du temps et du lieu*" (Thibon, *L'illusion féconde* [Paris: Fayard, 1995], 33; all emphases added).

22. See, for example, the chapter "Dialogue and Understanding," in *Eu & tu & el & ea*, 181–82; 176–77.

23. One such exception is the Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor. Two of his books are particularly important in this respect: *The Sources of the Self: The Making of Human Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

24. For a good analysis of Havel's politics of authenticity in connection with Charles Taylor's ethics of authenticity, see Ivars Ijabs's chapter in this volume. Also see Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).

25. The core of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue can be found in *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). A good introduction to Lévinas is *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Other representatives of dialogical philosophy are: Franz Rosenzweig, Ferdinand Ebner, and Mihail

Bakhtin. For a general introduction, see Michael Theunissen, *The Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), an abbreviated translation of *Der Andere* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1965).

26. Writes Buber: "To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination *I-Thou*. The other primary word is the combination *I-It*. Hence the *I* of man is also twofold. Fir the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* is a different I from that of the primary word *I-It*" (Buber, *I and Thou*, 3). For a perceptive analysis of Buber and Şora, also see Ştefan Augustin Doinaş, "Mihai Şora şi condiţia dialogului interior," in *Dialog şi libertate*, 120–29.

27. See Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, Band I: Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950).

28. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge," in *The Lévinas Reader*, 61.

29. On his topic, also see Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 4–5.

30. Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 60. It is worth pointing out that the text from which I quote was originally published in 1987 (and republished in *Firul ierbii* a decade later). This theme is also discussed in the last chapter of *Eu & tu & el & ea* (206–20).

31. Sora, *Firul ierbii*, 440.

32. Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 56–58. This theme also looms large in *Eu & tu & el & ea* (211–20) where Şora interprets it in the light of the distinction between *to be* and *to have*. He writes: "The open 'we' always gives . . . on the level of *being*. Its attitude is one of sharing. . . . On the contrary, the closed 'we' is entirely grounded on the level of *having*" (*Eu & tu & el & ea*, 217).

33. Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 453. For an overview of Şora's political and civic views applied to the context of contemporary Romania, see Antohi and Şora, *Mai avem un viitor?* Şora's strong defense of diversity and pluralism applied to the context of Europe and European civilization can be found in his essay (originally written and published in French) "*Unitas in pluralitate* ou l'Europe en son entier," *Secolul* 20, no. 7–9 (1980). A Romanian version of this text appeared in Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 9–22.

34. Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 453; also see 430–33, where Şora defends administrative decentralization and a minimal state *sui generis*. I note in passing the affinity between Şora's ideas and Havel's plea for strengthening the role of local communities. For more information, see Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in John Keane, ed., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (London: Verso, 1985), 93.

35. For a discussion on this topic, see Şora's essay "The Theology of Politics," in *Firul ierbii*, 259–68.

36. While it is essential to highlight the connections between democracy and the market, it is equally important *not* to conflate them. For an overview, see Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, eds., *Economic Reform and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, Latin America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

37. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 451.

38. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 435.

39. Writes Şora: "In order to be able to function properly, civil society constantly needs an intense communitarian life as expressed through and by unique individuals who are not interchangeable. . . . The duty of the state is to foster this communitarian life" (Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 441).

40. For an overview of the liberal-communitarian debate, see Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

41. On this topic, see Şora's important text, "Câteva elemente de doctrină politică pentru România de azi," published in *Firul ierbii*, 310–27.

42. As already mentioned, Şora's political ideal shares important affinities with Gustave Thibon's ideas. In a speech given at the invitation of a meeting of the Association *Lions Prospective* in Marseille, Thibon described his ideal community in terms that could have also been endorsed by Şora: "Ces valeurs que nous défendons: *liberté, solidarité, responsabilité, autorité, sélection*, ne peuvent s'incarner dans les faits que dans une *société pluraliste et 'hautement' différenciée*. J'y crois de tout mon coeur. Ce qui implique—et je ne dis pas que c'est facile, mais je dis que c'est nécessaire—une décongestion, une ventilation du corps social, une dissémination harmonieuse des tâches et des responsabilités, un climat où le contact vécu avec le prochain—ce sentiment du 'nous'—permette à l'individu de sortir de son isolement sans tomber dans les regroupements artificiels et anti-sociaux issus des idéologies de classes et de partis. Cet idéal là, se situe aux antipodes non seulement du nivellement égalitaire, mais de toutes les formes de technocratie et de totalitarisme qui paralysent les libertés individuelles, qui dissolvent les communautés naturelles et qui favorisent à tous les niveaux le parasitisme et l'irresponsabilité" (all emphases added). Thibon's words are extracted from an essay by Jacques Garello, "Gustave Thibon, Philosophe de la liberté," published in *Société*, on the occasion of Thibon's death in January 2001. The text was originally posted online at www.libres.org/francais/societe/societe.htm (accessed July 2003). Also see Gustave Thibon, *Entretiens avec Christian Chabanis* (Paris: Fayard, 1975), 93.

43. Wilhelm Röpke, *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (Wilmington, Del.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998), 91.

44. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 7; all emphases added.

45. This phrase is taken from Tocqueville's notes published for the first time in the critical edition of *De la démocratie en Amérique*, ed. Eduardo Nolla (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 2:272nH.

46. It was George Saville, Marquess of Halifax (1633–1695), who penned the classical definition of the trimmer in his essay, "The Character of a Trimmer," written in 1684 to 1685 and published in 1688. "This innocent word *Trimmer*," wrote Halifax, "signifieth no more than this, That if Men are together in a boat, and one part of the company would weigh it down on one side, another would make it lean as much to the contrary; it happeneth there is a third Opinion of those, who conceive it would do as well, if the Boat went even, without endangering the passengers" (Halifax, *Complete Works*, ed. J. P. Kenyon [London: Penguin, 1969], 50).

47. See Raymond Aron, *Thinking Politically*, ed. Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian Anderson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1997), and *The Opium of*

*the Intellectuals*, ed. Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian Anderson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2001).

48. G. M. Tamás, "Democracy's Triumph, Philosophy's Peril," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 1 (2000): 103–10; Slavoj Žižek, *Revolution at the Gates: Žižek on Lenin, the 1917 Writings* (London: Verso, 2004); also see *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* (London: Verso, 2001).

49. See Michnick's essay "Gray Is Beautiful," in *Letters from Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

50. Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 468.

51. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism, Freedom in the Modern World, and a Letter on Independence* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 238.

52. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 238.

53. See Şora, *Firul ierbii*, 314–22, and Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 117. Worth noting in this regard is Şora's distinction between "functional" and "ontological" identity (*Firul ierbii*, 314). In his view, the latter constitutes the uniqueness of each human being and must never be obliterated by the former.

54. Şora, *Eu & tu & el & ea*, 54.

55. Şora recommends such a "personalist" therapy in *Clipa şi Timpul*, 100, and *Firul ierbii*, 317. The distinction between "person" and "individual" looms large in his writings, and can be traced back to his early phase influenced by Maritain's neo-Thomism and Mounier's personalism.

56. On this topic, see Şora's revealing postscript to the Romanian translation of *Du dialogue intérieur* in *Despre dialogul interior*, 201–14.

57. I borrow this phrase from Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

58. See, for example, Charles Péguy, *Men and Saints*, trans. Anne and Julian Green (New York: Pantheon Books, 1944), 232–49.

59. Şora, *Filosoficale: Filosofia ca viaţă*, 149. For a provocative characterization of Noica's apolitical philosophy, see E. M. Cioran's statement quoted in Gabriel Liiceanu, *The Păltiniş Diary*, trans. James Christian Brown (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 140.

60. Mihai Şora, *Despre toate şi ceva în plus; De vorbă cu Leonid Dragomir* [About Everything and Something More: Conversations with Leonid Dragomir] (Piteşti, Romania: Paralela 45, 2005), 56.

61. Liiceanu, *The Păltiniş Diary*, 12. In *National Identity under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Katherine Verdery paid special attention to Constantin Noica's political ideas, but regrettably did not discuss any of Mihai Şora's writings.

62. Liiceanu, *The Păltinis Diary*, xxxi. Noica's own words are telling in this regard: "80 percent will prove unworthy of the hope placed in them, and will use the credit to buy Jaguars, to play roulette, or for erotic intrigues" (Liiceanu, *The Păltiniş Diary*, 11–12). For an interpretation of Noica's philosophy, in addition to Verdery's book, I also recommend the following exegeses: Sorin Lavric, *Ontologia lui Noica. O exegeză* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005); Ioan Dur, *Noica, între dandysm şi mitul şcolii* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1994); Andrei Cornea, *De la şcoala de la Atena la şcoala de la Păltiniş* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004); Sorin Antohi, "Commuting to Castalia: Noica's 'School,' Culture, and Power in Communist Romania," published as a fore-

word to the English translation of *The Păltiniş Diary*, vii–xxiv; and Adrian Marino, "Cazul Noica," in Marino, *Politică şi cultură* (Iaşi, Romania: Polirom, 1996).

63. From a conversation of Liiceanu with Noica on January 25, 1981, recorded in Liiceanu, *The Păltiniş Diary*, 167.

64. Şora, *Eu & tu & el & ea*, 65.

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